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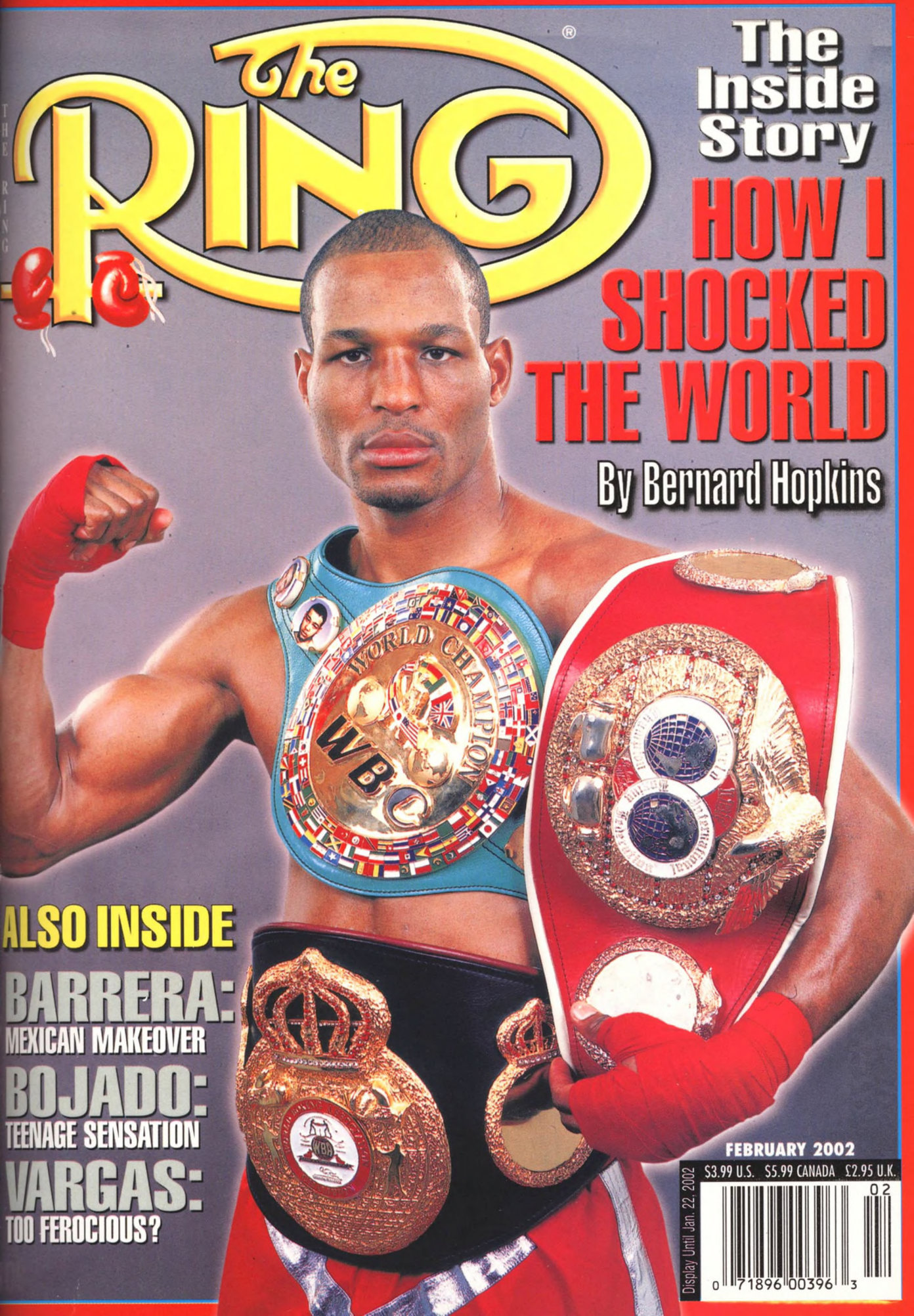
The RING

The Inside Story

HOW I SHOCKED THE WORLD

By Bernard Hopkins



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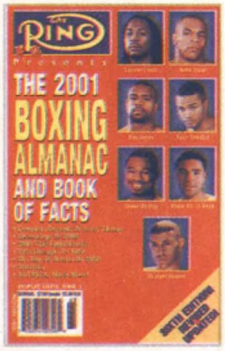

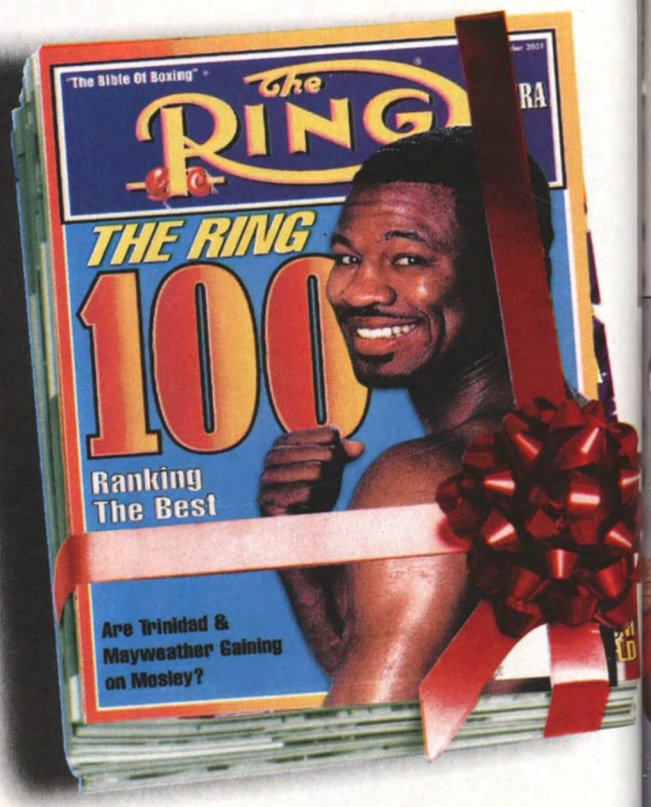

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CONTENTS

February 2002

page 22

PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

FEATURES

22 **HOW I SHOCKED THE WORLD**
The Inside Story Of The Trinidad Upset
By Bernard Hopkins

30 **BORN AGAIN AS A BOXER ... BARRERA'S BETTER THAN EVER!**
A Complete Style Makeover Has Revitalized The Featherweight Champ's Career
By William Dettloff

36 **VARGAS GIVES THE FANS WHAT THEY WANT**
But Is He Too Ferocious For His Own Good?
By Jeff Ryan

42 **IS FRANCISCO BOJADO AS GOOD AS EVERYBODY THINKS?**
The Teenage Sensation Displays The Poise And Maturity Of A Veteran
By Kevin Iole

48 **HOW BOXING RESPONDS TO NATIONAL CRISES**
From Draft-Dodgers To Patriots
By Pete Ehrmann

page 36

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Cover:
Bernard Hopkins
by Bruce MacNabb

Cover Design:
Joe Kalman

page 30

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Ringside Reports And Analyses

56 **FIGHTER OF THE MONTH & RINGSIDE REPORTS**

Ratings

13 **RATINGS ANALYSIS**

14 **THE RING'S INTERNATIONAL RATINGS AND RECORDS**

64 **WBA, WBC, & IBF RATINGS**

DEPARTMENTS

6 **RINGSIDE,** ***by Nigel Collins***

8 **ROUND ONE**

16 **CAMERA CLICKS**

18 **RYAN OUT LOUD,** ***by Jeff Ryan***

20 **NEW FACES: Junior Middleweight Jim Rock,** ***by Patrick Myler***

54 **WORLDWIDE FIGHT RESULTS**

66 **THE RING CLASSIC: LOUIS IN ARMY, WILL AID MORALE,** ***by Daniel M. Daniel***

72 **COME OUT WRITING**

74 **LOOKING AHEAD,** ***by Eric Raskin***

RINGSIDE

Historically, the most significant aspect of Bernard Hopkins' knockout of Felix Trinidad was that it was "The Executioner's" 14th defense of the IBF middleweight title, which tied the division record held by Carlos Monzon. There are, however, a couple of caveats that need to be examined in a little more detail.

Most obvious is that all of Monzon's defenses were for the true, linear title, while Hopkins only held one of the three alphabet titles until he unified the crown by beating Keith Holmes for the WBC version and Trinidad for the WBA belt. The second point of contention is that all of Monzon's defenses resulted in either a kayo or points victory, while one of Hopkins' (his first fight with Robert Allen) ended in a no-contest.

While these subtleties mean little to most promoters, publicists, and alphabet bandits, to THE RING and all boxing purists, they are very important considerations. So let's take a look at both questions.

In this particular case, I don't think Hopkins should be penalized because he only held the IBF belt for most of his reign. The WBC stripped Monzon of its bauble in 1974, and recognized Rodrigo Valdes until Monzon beat him in '76. So if we're going to credit Monzon for the three defenses he made between those dates, it's only fair that Hopkins is afforded the same consideration. Another thing in Hopkins' favor is that he eventually did what he stated he wanted to do when he first gained IBF recognition—unify the title. And the fact that the final step came against a fighter of Trinidad's stature makes his case even stronger.

The no-contest conundrum is a bit trickier. None of the champions who hold the record in other divisions include no-contests among their defenses, but some of them—featherweight Abe Attell and strawweight Ricardo Lopez, for example—count draws among their division records. And as a no-contest and a draw are both stalemates of sorts, it makes sense to include Hopkins' no-contest among his tally.

Bottom line: As far as THE RING is concerned, Hopkins is deadlocked with Monzon with 14 defenses, and if the Philadelphian is successful in his next defense, he'll own the new division record.

Congratulations, Bernard. You backed up every word you ever said with your fists, and in the process gave boxing a much-needed shot of integrity by uniting one of its most prestigious championships. And for that, lovers of the Sweet Science owe you a debt of gratitude. Thanks, champ. We needed that.

***

I would be amiss if I let this moment in middleweight history pass without a few words about Trinidad. Like Hopkins, he conducted himself with honor between the ropes and showed tremendous courage, continuing to come forward until the very end, despite the fight-long battering he took. Tito's many fans can take pride in his warrior's heart and solace in the fact that he went out like a true champion—on his shield. You can't ask for anything more than that.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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ROUND ONE

SANDY SADDLER, 1926-2001

To hear Charley Johnston tell it, it wasn't just Sandy Saddler's height (5'8½"), the fact that he beat Willie Pep three out of four times, nor even his astonishing 103 knockouts in 144 wins (sixth on the all-time kayo list) that made the leggy, left-hooking featherweight champion of the 1940s and '50s stand head and shoulders above most other fighters in an era filled with so many great ones. On top of all that, Saddler's manager said, Saddler was "the easiest guy in the world to handle. I never have to worry about him. He likes to stay indoors after supper and write letters. Give him the typewriter, a phonograph, and a radio, and he's happy."

Saddler: All-time great feather dies at 75

Between the ropes, Saddler's tastes weren't always so basic. In addition to being an excellent boxer and one of the biggest punchers in 126-pound history, Saddler, who died on September 18 in the Bronx at age 75 after a long bout with Alzheimer's disease, could use his head and thumbs as skillfully as anybody in boxing. His fights with Pep were foulfests, each one successively worse. Pep claimed that a "double armlock" won it for Saddler in their third fight, which drew 38,781 fans to Yankee Stadium and the biggest gate up to then ($262,118) below the middleweight class.

But there was nothing questionable about the left hook that put Pep on the deck and out in the fourth round of their first meeting on October 29, 1948. Only 22 years old, Saddler had already fought 93 times as a pro up to then, and all over the world. Pep, 26, had lost just once in 136 fights.

The return match, won by Pep in 15 rounds 104 days later, was THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1949. "It was one of the greatest fights I ever saw," recalled legendary sportswriter W.C. Heinz. "To win, Pep had to use every one of his wiles, all the ability he had." Saddler then briefly held the junior lightweight title before wresting the 126-pound belt back from Pep in 1950 and holding it for the next seven years until his retirement in '57 due to an eye injury suffered outside the ring.

Fighting the best of his time, including eight world champions, Saddler lost only 16 times in 162 pro fights, with two draws. He was stopped just once, in his second pro bout. It's an imposing resume that stands on its own, but Saddler will forever be linked in ring history with his bitterest rival, Pep. Although they later became friends, from time to time Saddler was nettled to hear the man he'd thrice beaten called the greatest featherweight titlist of all-time. A.J. Liebling contended that the public and sportswriters never forgave Saddler (who, Liebling wrote, was "built like a bundle of loosely joined fishing poles") for beating a legend.

But as time went on, Saddler's own high place in boxing history was validated. He went into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990, the same year as Pep. And though he might grumble about the way it starts out, Saddler would be pleased by the assessment of Heinz. "As a featherweight," Heinz said, "you have to say he licked one of the greats in Willie Pep. I think Saddler must rank in the first four or five of all-time."

What he would do to today's crop of featherweights wouldn't be pretty, not only because of the wide disparity in experience and fighting skills, but also because God only knows where these kids today go and what they do after supper.

—Pete Ehrmann

A REFEREEING LEGEND RETIRES

Arthur Mercante Sr. had the best seat in the house for almost six decades, up close and personal with the likes of Sugar Ray Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, and Floyd Patterson. Mercante was the third man in the ring for 145 world title fights during a refereeing career that began in 1942 and landed him in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1995.

But on September 29, 2001, the 81-year-old Mercante ended his illustrious career, going out the only way he knew, reffing the IBF junior flyweight world title fight between champion Ricardo Lopez and Zolani Petelo as part of the Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad undercard at Madison Square Garden.

"When everyone learned of my age, 81, they started asking me when I was going to retire," Mercante told HBO's Jim Lampley after Lopez knocked out Petelo in the eighth round.

Mercante was the referee for Ali-Frazier I at MSG, and also officiated fights for all three Sugars, Robinson, Ray Leonard, and Shane Mosley. He also reffed such famous fights as Patterson-Ingemar Johansson II, George Foreman-Frazier I, and Ali-Ken Norton III.

"I used to tell them I don't think I ever will retire," Mercante said. "But I do think now I'll have a rest. Maybe I'll sit down and be a judge. Boxing has done so much for me. I've been all over the world, and I've met such fine people."

It seemed only fitting then that Mercante finished his career by raising the hand of Lopez, an aging but still excellent fighter who has been a champion for over a decade. As the legendary ref says goodbye, he sees a bright future for the Sweet Science.

"I think boxing is coming back very healthy right now," Mercante said. "New York is having several more shows, and there is a lot of great talent out there, but it's all in the middle divisions. That's the way it used to be, with the Jake LaMottas and Rocky Graziano. That type of boxing is coming back."

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Mercante finally called it quits after the Lopez fight

—Joe Santoliquito

AYALA PLEADS GUILTY TO REDUCED CHARGES

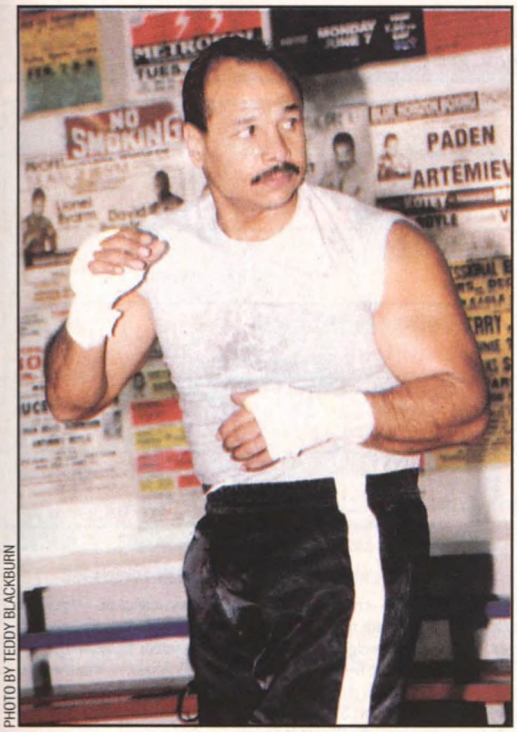


PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Ayala: Played it safe in September trial

Like fight judges, juries in criminal cases are impossible to predict. Therefore, even though the prosecution was on the ropes, Tony Ayala Jr. decided it was better to cop a plea than risk life imprisonment. So ended Ayala's trial in San Antonio, Texas, where, in September, the comebacking junior middleweight faced charges of burglary with intent to commit sexual assault.

The 38-year-old Ayala, who has already served more than 16 years in New Jersey for sexual assault, could have spent the rest of his life behind bars if he had he been found guilty. But when the testimony of key witness Nancy Gomez contradicted both crime lab reports and her earlier statements, the prosecution offered Ayala a deal in which he would plead guilty to a lesser charge of burglary and receive 90 days in jail and 10 years probation.

Gomez claimed she shot Ayala in the shoulder when she awoke to find him standing in the room where she was sleeping. But lab tests indicated that there was no trace of gunpowder on Gomez' hands. Instead, residue was found on the hands of Sandra Gutierrez, another woman who was in the house at the time of the shooting. Gomez' testimony also made it clear that she had spent more time with Ayala outside of the gym, where they had met, than she had originally led the Bexar County district attorney's office to believe. The defense had argued all along that Ayala entered an unlocked door and wanted only to talk to Gomez.

Ayala, who wore an electronic ankle monitor when he beat Santos Cardona in July to raise his record to 28-1 (24), will continue his boxing career after serving his sentence.

—Nigel Collins

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
9-21-01	Mike Stewart KO 6 Manard Reed	ESPN2	jw	C-	B	C
Reed's corner said Eddie Cotton stopped it too soon, but notice Reed wasn't complaining						
9-21-01	Nick Acevedo W 10 Carlos Bojorquez	ESPN2	jm	C+	B	C+
Fighting over his weight and with a busted hand, Acevedo still a little too slick for mechanical Bojorquez						
9-22-01	**Fernando Vargas KO 7 Shibata Flores**	**HBO**	**WBA jm**	**A-**	**C+**	**B**
Vargas isn't all the way back, but he's getting there						
9-23-01	Gabriel Elizondo W 6 Glenn Donaire	FOXSN	fl	C-	B+	A
Down twice, Elizondo comes back to win one of the most exciting six-round prelims you'll ever see						
9-23-01	John Michael Johnson KO 7 Harold Grey	FOXSN	jf	C+	C-	B
Grey beaten up most of the way, but manages to score a knockdown himself before leaving						
9-28-01	Leonard Dorin W 10 Emmanuel Augustus	ESPN2	l	C+	B	C-
Augustus not the same guy who warred with Micky Ward, and not just in name						
9-29-01	Joan Guzman W 12 Edel Ruiz	Show	jf	C	B+	C+
"Little Tyson" scores late knockdown, but can't finish scrappy Ruiz						
9-29-01	Ebo Elder Tech. Win 6 Dagoberta Najera	Show	jw	C	B+	B
Decent action fight marred by mass confusion at end; Washington commission makes New York look downright efficient						
9-29-01	**Steve Forbes W 12 John Brown**	**Show**	**IBF jl**	**A-**	**A-**	**C+**
Forbes not the best or most exciting junior lightweight in the world, but the guy can fight						
9-29-01	**Joel Casamayor KO 8 Joe Morales**	**Show**	**WBA jl**	**A**	**C**	**C**
Casamayor dominates tough but outclassed Morales; when will we see Casamayor-Freitas?						
9-29-01	Ratanachai Vorapin W 10 Danny Romero	PPV	jf	B	B+	C+
Now you know why it's been years since you've seen Romero against a top guy						
9-29-01	**Ricardo Lopez KO 8 Zolani Petelo**	**PPV**	**IBF jfl**	**A**	**B**	**B**
Anyone who doesn't have Lopez in his top 10 pound-for-pound is biased against little guys						
9-29-01	**Bernard Hopkins KO 12 Felix Trinidad**	**PPV**	**WBC/WBA/IBF m**	**A+**	**A**	**B+**
It's not often a guy talks as much trash as Hopkins did and then backs up every word of it; good for him						
9-30-01	Yory Boy Campas KO 5 Ronnie Martinez	Uni	m	C+	C-	C
If Campas decided never again to face a top-flight guy, he could go on forever						
10-5-01	Thomas Tate KO 4 Omar Sheika	ESPN2	sm	A-	A	A
This was great for as long as it lasted; imagine the carnage had it gone 12 rounds						
10-5-01	Charles Brewer W 12 Fernando Zuniga	ESPN2	sm	B+	C+	C
Brewer superb against ordinary but iron-chinned Zuniga; how about Thomas Tate next?						
10-6-01	Angel Manfredy W 12 Julio Diaz	HBO	l	A-	A+	B+
We might have voted the other way, but this was a good one all the way around						
10-7-01	Jason Robinson KO 4 Jose Luis Rivera	FOXSN	c	B-	C+	C+
Counting Robinson and Vassiliy Jirov, there are at least two cruisers who can end a fight with a bodypunch						
10-7-01	Lamont Pearson KO 6 Jesse Gutierrez	FOXSN	jl	B-	B-	C
A beauty of an uppercut starts Gutierrez downhill and, no, we wouldn't mind seeing Pearson against Joel Casamayor						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

MELTDOWN IN MARYLAND

While the June ring death of Maryland's Beethavean Scottland was still on the minds of many ringsiders, it clearly wasn't on the minds of some folks as former IBF junior middleweight titlist Vincent Pettway was allowed to absorb far too much punishment during his August 31 bout in Baltimore against Luis Rosado on the untelevised undercard of ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. The 35-year-old Pettway, 43-7-1 (32), had won five straight bouts against dubious competition, but hadn't fought in two years, and his inactivity and diminished ability were apparent throughout. Pettway overcommitted and missed, while Rosado landed frequently, wobbling Pettway often and dropping him at the bell ending the third round.

"That's when they should have stopped the fight," said Rosado. But nobody did, and a series of dismal blunders followed. Between the third and fourth rounds, Pettway's trainer, Mack Lewis, with referee Ken Chevalier only a few feet away, worked on a cut for about 30 seconds past the one-minute break. Dr. Steve Manekin threw a towel into the ring in the fifth round, but Chevalier tossed it back out.

"I was sitting right behind Pettway's corner. Manekin was screaming for Mack to stop the fight, but he got the brush-off," said *USA Today* boxing writer Dan Rafael. Dr. Doug Frankel finally climbed into the ring and convinced Chevalier to stop the bout at 2:05 of the sixth. "There was some miscommunication about who can do what and when," said Rafael. "Funny thing is, I was telling my girlfriend as we walked into the show how well Maryland's commission handles itself."

Maryland State Athletic Commission head Pat Pannella promised to review the incident and "find out exactly what went on." But during another benefit show in Baltimore on September 27 that raised $15,000 for Scottland's family, Pannella wouldn't comment on the still-ongoing investigation. Sources close to the investigation indicated that Pettway had not, as of September 27, turned in the results of his postfight CATscan.

"It was a bad night," said the show's promoter, Scott Wagner, who doesn't think the commission will renew Pettway's license. "Our commission operates with the highest integrity. They'll learn from their mistakes."

—Lem Satterfield

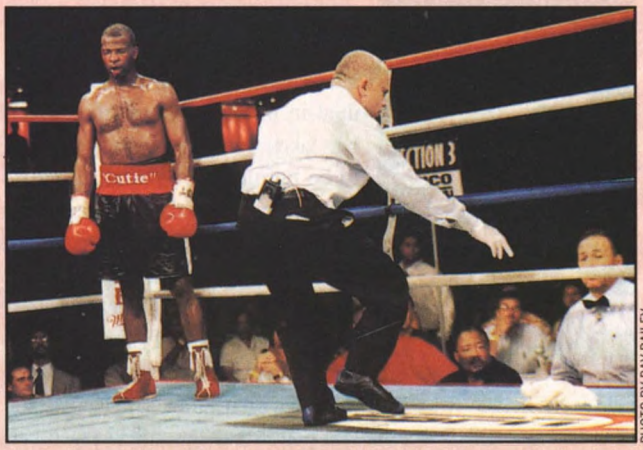


PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

Chevalier kicks out the towel as Pettway looks a mess

A WOMAN'S TOUCH

PHOTO BY DALE S. HAUSNER

Cutwoman Marconi attends to Diana Lewis

Back when Vickki Kay Marconi was a kid, little girls grew up dreaming about becoming princesses, singers, or movie stars. All that's changed, of course, and today some little girls even fantasize about becoming the next Laila Ali or Lucia Rijker. But the next Chuck Bodak?

Marconi is different. The 45-year-old mother of two from Indiana is a loan officer for a mortgage company by day, but during her off hours she's living her dream of being a cutwoman. She got into boxing through her husband, trainer Ray Marconi, and was schooled by none other than Bodak. The famous cutman is a friend of the Marconi family, and was "tickled pink" when he learned Vickki Kay wanted to learn the craft.

Marconi currently works with Indianapolis welterweight Mike "The Machine" Davis and female fighter Diana Lewis. She is also frequently called upon to fill in for fighters who don't have a regular cutperson.

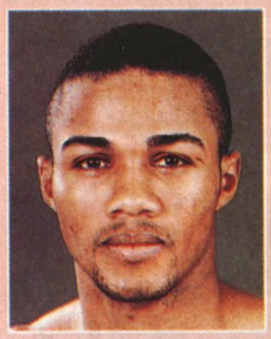
One of Marconi's toughest assignments came when Davis fought former featherweight champion Jorge Paez in November 2000. Davis began bleeding in the second round, but Marconi kept the cut under control, which allowed Davis to last the 10-round distance, albeit in a losing cause.

"I've gotten a lot of raised eyebrows and snickering, but I have never been denied a second's license," said Marconi. "When they find out that I know what I'm doing, and that I've been trained by Chuck Bodak, it seems to make a difference."

To date, however, Marconi has resisted plastering her head with photographs of the fighters she works with.

—Dale S. Hausner

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Trinidad: Personal troubles, too

It was incorrectly reported in the December 2001 issue of THE RING that former light heavyweight contender **Lotte Mwale** of Zambia had died in late-July. That information was taken from reports that turned out to be untrue. As we went to press, Mwale was in South Africa receiving treatment for an undisclosed illness … Yet another accusation of rape was leveled at former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** in late-September. Police searched Tyson's Las Vegas home—with a SWAT team on hand outside the gates—after an unidentified woman told police that Tyson had raped her. No charges had been filed as of press time, and no further details were released about the allegation in order to protect all parties while the investigation is ongoing … Even before he stepped into the ring with **Bernard Hopkins**, **Felix Trinidad's** reputation took a hit when word got out in early-September that the three-division champion had a mistress who was five months pregnant. The otherwise squeaky-clean Trinidad, who is married and has two daughters, confirmed the rumors on a Spanish-language late night TV show and said he would "deal with this situation after the [Hopkins] fight" … ESPN announced in early-September that *Friday Night Fights* blow-by-blow man **Bob Papa** had signed a two-year extension with the network … The New Jersey-based boxing record-keeping company Fight Fax changed ownership in mid-September, when former RING managing editor **Phill Marder** sold the company to assistant **Anibal Miramontes** and his wife, **Helen Davies-Miramontes**. "Anibal is the only choice as my successor," said Marder … Following the departure of promoter **Dan Goossen**, America Presents lost their matchmaker **Tom Brown**, in mid-September. Brown defected to Goossen's relaunched Ten Goose Sports … Say goodbye to the name "TVKO." HBO announced at the Hopkins-Trinidad fight that their pay-per-view arm would be known simply as "HBO Pay-Per-View" from now on … Former middleweight contender **Harold Green** died in early-September of an apparent heart attack in Las Vegas. Brooklyn, New York, native Green, 78, won two out of three against **Rocky Graziano**, split two bouts with **Joey Giardello**, and defeated a faded **Fritzie Zivic** as well. But Green, 70-14-3 (23), never received a title shot in his 12-year career … 1940s Washington, D.C., lightweight **Lew Hanbury** died of cancer in late-August at the age of 77. While Hanbury wasn't a standout as a pro, he did have an excellent amateur career that earned him induction into the Washington Boxing Hall of Fame in 1980 … Condolences go out to the family of **Teddy Atlas**, whose nephew, **Greg Atlas**, was among the New York firefighters who died saving the lives of others at the World Trade Center on September 11. ESPN2 analyst Atlas delivered a powerful tribute to his nephew, and all those who perished in the same brave manner that day, on the September 21 *Friday Night Fights* broadcast.

Green: 1940s middleweight dies

THE PUNCHLINES

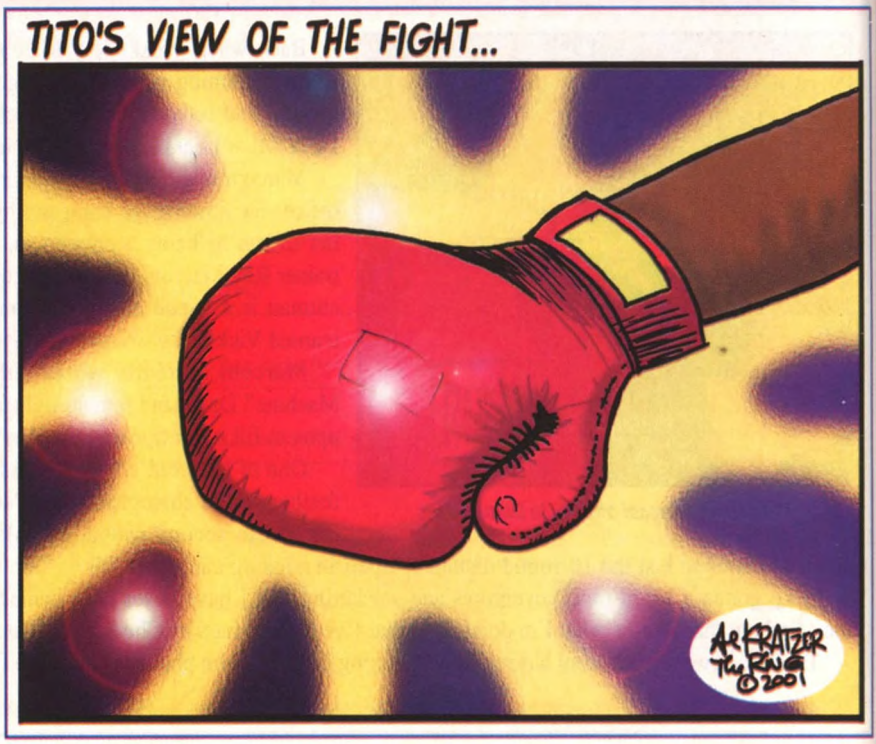
"I've had my bones to pick with Don King, but Don understands that it's better to be on my side. Come in with Joe Frazier, go out with George Foreman. We're probably more together now than anytime."

—Bernard Hopkins, after defeating King's superstar, Felix Trinidad

"Unless you've been an elite athlete, it might seem inexplicable why we do the things we do, at the age that we try to do it."

—Sugar Ray Leonard, on Michael Jordan's decision to return to the NBA

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **SHANE MOSLEY** Welterweight
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight
3. **ROY JONES** Light Heavyweight
4. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Featherweight
5. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Junior Lightweight
6. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Middleweight
7. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Junior Middleweight
8. **RICARDO LOPEZ** Junior Flyweight
9. **ERIK MORALES** Featherweight
10. **TIM AUSTIN** Bantamweight

(For period ended October 14, 2000)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Streaking Clinton Woods debuts at number 10, replacing Chris Johnson, whose career remains in limbo following his brutal kayo loss to sixth-rated Antonio Tarver.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: James Butler (10th last issue), who recently suffered a one-sided decision defeat to IBF champ Sven Ottke, exits to make room for Manuel Siaca, who lost a debatable split decision to WBA titlist Byron Mitchell. Charles Brewer (sixth last issue) and Thomas Tate (formerly seventh) climb to fifth and sixth, respectively, following wins over Fernando Zuniga and Omar Sheika. Eric Lucas slips from fifth to seventh to accommodate Brewer and Tate's advancement.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Shibata Flores (ninth last issue) is gone due to his knockout loss to Fernando Vargas. Flores' departure allows Roman Karmazin (10th last issue) to move up to ninth place. Undefeated Steve Roberts debuts at number 10.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Michele Piccirillo's decision over Rafael Pineda (seventh last issue) knocks the Colombian veteran out of the ratings, and brings the previously unranked Piccirillo aboard at number nine. Antonio Diaz, who was formerly ranked as a junior welter, enters the 147-pound division at number six. Inactive James Page drops from seventh to 10th, and is in danger of removal if he doesn't fight soon. Cory Spinks (10th last issue) falls out to make room for Diaz.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Antonio Diaz' (fourth last issue) move up to the welterweight class pushes everybody behind him up one spot from last issue. The void at number 10 is filled by Terronn Millett.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Julio Diaz jumps from 10th to sixth on the strength of his highly controversial decision loss to Angel Manfredy, who stays put at number five. Previously unranked Raul Balbi crashes the ratings at number four after beating Julien Lorcy (fourth last issue) for the WBA belt. Lorcy departs.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Danny Romero (10th last issue) is gone following his decision loss to unranked Ratanachai Vorapin. Agapito Sanchez is the new number 10.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Eidy Moya debuts at number three after knocking out Adan Vargas (third last issue) for the vacant WBA title. Vargas slides to eighth. Rafael Marquez is installed at number four after upsetting Mark Johnson, while Johnson drops from fourth to fifth. Jorge Eliecer Julio (ninth last issue) and Toshiaki Nishioka (10th last issue) leave to make room for the two newcomers.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Nelson Dieppa rises from ninth to sixth on the strength of his win over Fahlan Sakkreerin (10th last issue). Sakkreerin exits. Zolani Petelo (sixth last issue) falls to ninth after being knocked out by IBF boss Ricardo Lopez. Baby Jake Matlala returns at number 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Bernard Hopkins (seventh last issue) leaps into the number-two position following his spectacular kayo of Felix Trinidad (second last issue), who falls to number six. Naseem Hamed (eighth last issue) still hasn't fought since his loss to Marco Antonio Barrera in early-April and has shown little or no interest in fighting anybody even remotely competitive. Therefore, we've given him the boot. Hamed's departure allows Ricardo Lopez (formerly ninth) and Erik Morales (10th last issue) to advance to eighth and ninth, respectively. Long-reigning IBF bantam champ Tim Austin debuts at number 10. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended October 14, 2001

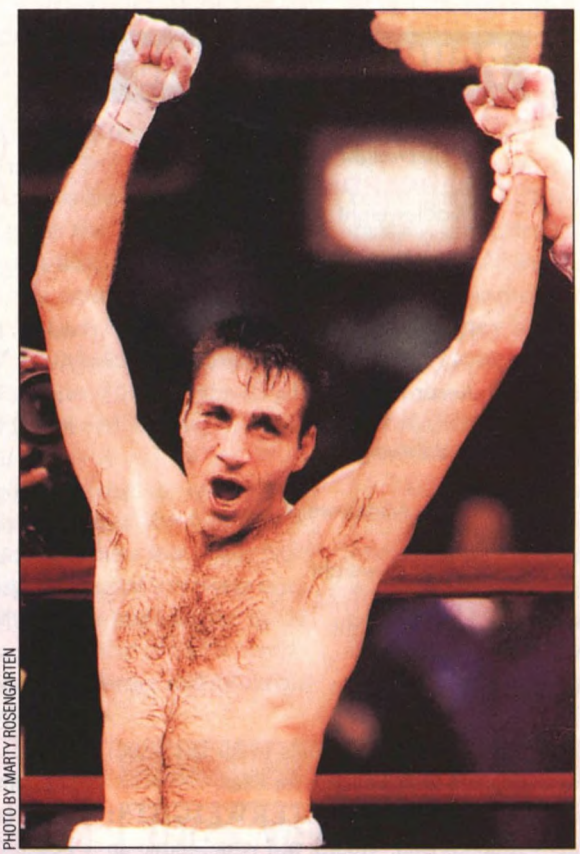


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Michele Piccirillo joins the welterweight ratings at number nine

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD *35-2 (WBC/IBF Champ)*
2. **LENNOX LEWIS** England *38-2-1*
3. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine *37-1*
4. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY *49-3*
5. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI *34-2*
6. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA *37-4 (WBA Champ)*
7. **KIRK JOHNSON** Canada *32-0-1*
8. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA *37-5-1*
9. **LANCE WHITAKER** Mission Hills, CA *23-1*
10. **DAVID TUA** New Zealand *38-3*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Whittier, CA *34-2 (WBC Champ)*
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA *22-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL *42-3 (IBF Champ)*
4. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** Spain *51-5*
5. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI *44-3*
6. **YORY BOY CAMPAS** Mexico *79-4*
7. **ALEX BUNEMA** Dallas, TX *19-2-1*
8. **J.C. CANDELO** Denver, CO *23-3-3*
9. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia *28-0-1*
10. **STEVE ROBERTS** England *26-0*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico *54-3*
2. **NASEEM HAMED** England *35-1*
3. **ERIK MORALES** Mexico *41-0 (WBC Champ)*
4. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Albuquerque, NM *50-2-2*
5. **DERRICK GAINER** Pensacola, FL *38-5 (WBA Champ)*
6. **FRANKIE TOLEDO** Paterson, NJ *40-5-1 (IBF Champ)*
7. **MBULELO BOTILE** South Africa *27-2*
8. **WILLIAM ABELYAN** Las Vegas, NV *17-4-1*
9. **GUTY ESPADAS** Mexico *34-4*
10. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico *36-2*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **BONES ADAMS** Henderson, KY *41-4-3*
2. **PAULIE AYALA** Ft. Worth, TX *33-1*
3. **MANNY PACQUAIO** Philippines *33-2 (IBF Champ)*
4. **WILLIE JORRIN** Sacramento, CA *28-0 (WBC Champ)*
5. **LEHLO LEDWABA** South Africa *33-2-1*
6. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** Mexico *28-2-2*
7. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico *40-3-1*
8. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England *31-1*
9. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** Venezuela *19-2-1*
10. **AGAPITO SANCHEZ** Dominican Republic *33-7-1*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN** Cincinnati, OH *23-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand *31-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **EIDY MOYA** Venezuela *15-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico *26-3*
5. **MARK JOHNSON** Washington, D.C. *40-2*
6. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark *51-2*
7. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** Panama *19-3-1*
8. **ADAN VARGAS** Mexico *36-3-1*
9. **HERIBERTO RUIZ** Mexico *22-1-1*
10. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico *24-3*

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ
Germany 33-0 (WBC Champ)
2. VASSILIY JIROV
Kazakhstan 30-0 (IBF Champ)
3. VIRGIL HILL
Bismarck, ND 47-3 (WBA Champ)
4. JOHNNY NELSON
England 40-12-1
5. CARL THOMPSON
England 28-5
6. O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 17-1
7. MARCELO DOMINGUEZ
Argentina 32-4-1
8. FABRICE TIOZZO
France 42-2
9. LOUIS AZILLE
Jersey City, NJ 16-0-2
10. WAYNE BRAITHWAITE
Guyana 16-0

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 45-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)
2. DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI
Germany 44-0
3. ERIC HARDING
Philadephia, PA 20-1-1
4. REGGIE JOHNSON
Houston, TX 42-6-1
5. MONTELL GRIFFIN
Chicago, IL 41-3
6. ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 18-1
7. JULIO GONZALEZ
Huntington Beach, CA 27-1
8. BRUNO GIRARD
France 39-2-2
9. LOU DEL VALLE
Bronx, NY 31-2-1
10. CLINTON WOODS
England 40-1

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. SVEN OTTKE
Germany 24-0 (IBF Champ)
2. JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 32-0
3. BYRON MITCHELL
Ozark, AL 24-1-1 (WBA Champ)
4. ANTWUN ECHOLS
Davenport, IA 25-4-1
5. CHARLES BREWER
Philadelphia, PA 37-8
6. THOMAS TATE
Houston, TX 41-6
7. ERIC LUCAS
Canada 33-4-3 (WBC Champ)
8. DINGAAN THOBELA
South Africa 40-8-2
9. MADS LARSEN
Denmark 37-1
10. MANUEL SIACA
Puerto Rico 15-4

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 40-2-1 (IBF/WBC/WBA Champ)
2. FELIX TRINIDAD
Puerto Rico 40-1
3. WILLIAM JOPPY
Washington, D.C. 32-2-1
4. ARMAND KRAJNC
Sweden 25-0
5. HARRY SIMON
Namibia 22-0
6. KEITH HOLMES
Washington, D.C. 35-3
7. HOWARD EASTMAN
England 32-0
8. HASSINE CHERIFI
France 32-5-1
9. CARL DANIELS
St. Louis, MO 47-3-1
10. ANTONIO PERUGINO
Italy 17-0

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. SHANE MOSLEY
Pomona, CA 38-0 (WBC Champ)
2. ANDREW LEWIS
Guyana 21-0-1 (WBA Champ)
3. VERNON FORREST
Atlanta, GA 33-0 (IBF Champ)
4. THOMAS DAMGAARD
Denmark 26-0
5. DANIEL SANTOS
Puerto Rico 24-2-1
6. ANTONIO DIAZ
Coachella, CA 37-3
7. ANTONIO MARGARITO
Mexico 25-3
8. MANUEL GOMEZ
Mexico 21-10
9. MICHELE PICCIRILLO
Italy 36-1-1
10. JAMES PAGE
Pittsburg, CA 25-4

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 27-1-1 (WBA/WBC Champ)
2. ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 27-0 (IBF Champ)
3. SHARMBA MITCHELL
Washington, D.C. 47-3
4. DeMARCUS CORLEY
Washington, D.C. 26-1-1
5. ENER JULIO
Colombia 21-3
6. RANDALL BAILEY
Miami, FL 24-1
7. MICKY WARD
Lowell, MA 37-10
8. BEN TACKIE
Ghana 23-2
9. OKTAY URKAL
Germany 28-1
10. TERRONN MILLETT
St. Louis, MO 25-2-1

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. JOSE LUIS CASTILLO
Mexico 44-4-1 (WBC Champ)
2. STEVE JOHNSTON
Denver, CO 33-2-1
3. PAUL SPADAFORA
Pittsburgh, PA 34-0 (IBF Champ)
4. RAUL BALBI
France 49-4-1 (WBA Champ)
5. ANGEL MANFREDY
Gary, IN 39-5-1
6. JULIO DIAZ
Coachella, CA 23-1
7. ARTUR GRIGORIAN
Uzbekistan 33-0
8. COLIN DUNNE
England 34-1
9. JESSE JAMES LEIJA
San Antonio, TX 42-5-2
10. JUAN LAZCANO
El Paso, TX 28-2-1

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 26-0 (WBC Champ)
2. JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 26-0 (WBA Champ)
3. ACELINO FREITAS
Brazil 30-0
4. JESUS CHAVEZ
Mexico 35-1
5. STEVE FORBES
Las Vegas, NV 20-1 (IBF Champ)
6. JONGKWON BAEK
South Korea 22-1-1
7. LAKVA SIM
Mongolia 14-2-1
8. JOHN BROWN
Atlantic City, NJ 23-9
9. ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ
Mexico 47-4-1
10. PHILLIP NDOU
South Africa 24-1

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. MASAMORI TOKUYAMA
North Korea 25-2-1 (WBC Champ)
2. CELES KOBAYASHI
Japan 24-4-3 (WBA Champ)
3. FELIX MACHADO
Venezuela 21-3-1 (IBF Champ)
4. GERRY PENALOSA
Philippines 43-4-2
5. SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND
Thailand 40-0
6. JESUS ROJAS
Venezuela 34-9-3
7. PEDRO ALCAZAR
Panama 22-1-1
8. IN JOO CHO
South Korea 18-2
9. MAURICIO PASTRANA
Colombia 26-3
10. MARTIN CASTILLO
Mexico 20-0

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. ERIC MOREL
Madison, WI 30-0 (WBA Champ)
2. PONGSAKLEK SINGWANGCHA
Thailand 40-2 (WBC Champ)
3. IRENE PACHECO
Colombia 25-0 (IBF Champ)
4. HAWK MAKEPULA
South Africa 19-1
5. MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND
Thailand 24-1
6. ALEJANDRO MONTIEL
Mexico 47-3
7. FERNANDO MONTIEL
Mexico 23-0-1
8. SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT
Thailand 39-1
9. MALCOLM TUNACAO
Philippines 11-1-2
10. ALEXANDER MUNOZ
Venezuela 16-0

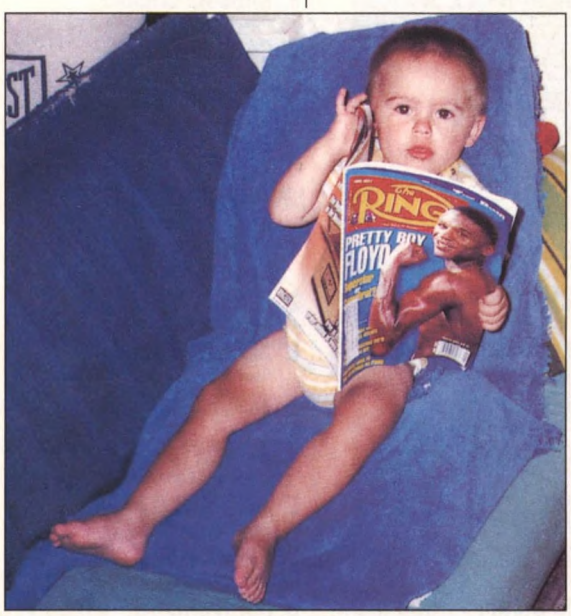
JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. RICARDO LOPEZ
Mexico 50-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. YOSAM CHOI
South Korea 23-1 (WBC Champ)
3. PICHIT C. SIRIWAT
Thailand 23-1
4. ROSENDO ALVAREZ
Nicaragua 29-2-1 (WBA Champ)
5. BEBIS MENDOZA
Colombia 26-1
6. NELSON DIEPPA
Puerto Rico 21-2-1
7. JORGE ARCE
Mexico 26-3-1
8. HIDENOBU HONDA
Japan 23-1
9. ZOLANI PETELO
South Africa 17-3-2
10. BABY JAKE MATLALA
South Africa 51-12-2

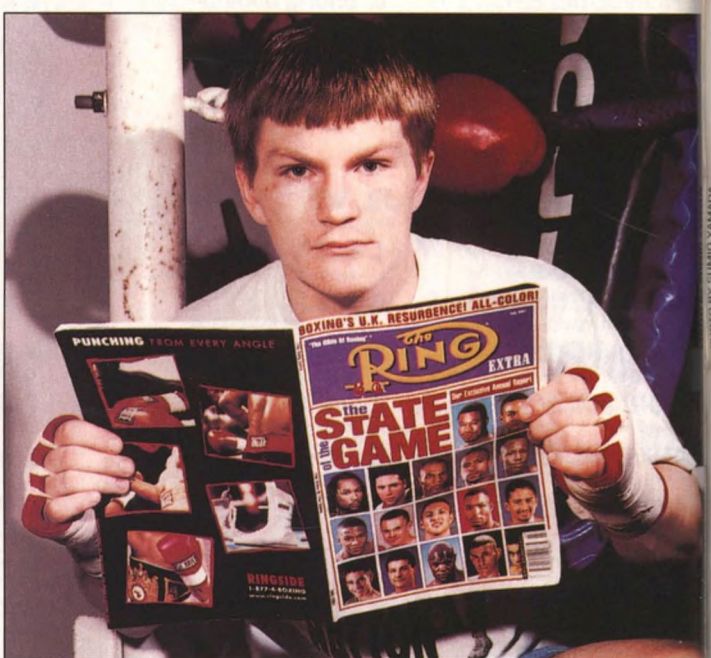
STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. YUTAKA NIIDA
Japan 14-0-3 (WBA Champ)
2. JOSE AGUIRRE
Mexico 25-1-1 (WBC Champ)
3. ROBERTO LEYVA
Mexico 18-0-1 (IBF Champ)
4. CHANA PORPAOIN
Thailand 44-2-2
5. KEITARO HOSHINO
Japan 21-7
6. JOMA GAMBOA
Philippines 31-6-1
7. NOEL ARAMBULET
Venezuela 13-2-1
8. WANDEE SINGWANGCHA
Thailand 28-4
9. KERMIN GUARDIA
Colombia 33-2
10. DANIEL REYES
Colombia 24-1

CAMERA CLICKS



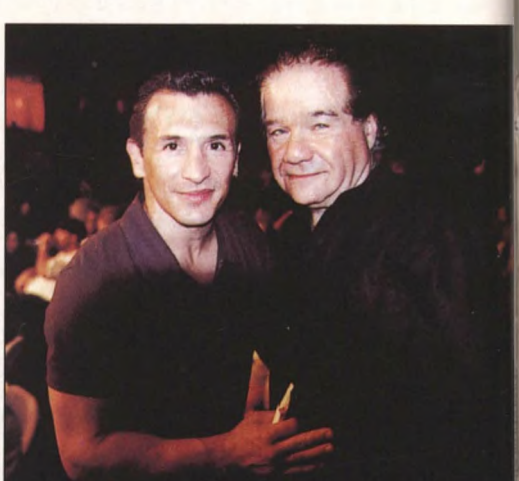
You're never too young to start reading THE RING. Just 18 months old, Nino Morgan of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, never misses an issue—although he apparently turns straight to Al Kratzer's cartoon each month and doesn't read much else.



British junior welterweight prospect Ricky Hatton is a fan of THE RING as well ... but he too buys it primarily for Al Kratzer's cartoon.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

THE RING named Roberto Duran the greatest lightweight of all-time in the September 2001 issue, and Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins presented Duran with an honorary belt soon after at a ceremony in Rochester, New York. No truth to the rumor that Duran let old pal Ken Buchanan try the belt on, then wound up and whacked him a few inches south of it.



He's not the greatest lightweight of all-time, but Ray Mancini is a former 135-pound champion, and here "Boom Boom" poses for a photo with veteran promoter Don Elbaum. In honor of Mancini's fine fighting career, Elbaum reportedly organized a press conference at which he planned to present Mancini with the gloves Ray Robinson wore in his first pro fight.

PHOTO BY SUMO YAMADA

As new WBA minimumweight champ Yutaka Niida is interviewed following his title victory over Chana Porpaoin, a couple of ring girls look on. You'll notice, though, that there are some differences between the Japanese girls and the round card girls in America. First off, the American beauties don't usually parade around in silver diapers. And second, not many of the American round card girls are built like Timmy Austin.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

CompuBox marvel Ray Oliveira looks utterly exhausted at the conclusion of his August battle with Ben Tackie. Despite losing the bout, "Sucra Ray" announced his intention afterward to fight on, and set a personal goal to throw over 30 million punches per round in his next fight.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Yes, Lennox, it's a bit loose, but it's better than having no belt at all, right? At the first press conference for the Hasim Rahman-Lennox Lewis rematch, a few days before tempers flared and TV studio sets were destroyed, Lewis seemed to get a kick out of "The Rock" presenting him with this belt to make up for taking his hardware from him in South Africa.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

More than 20 years after their final official fight, Sandy Saddler and Willie Pep gave it one last go in an exhibition bout at Madison Square Garden. Apparently, the dirty tactics that marred their third and fourth fights carried over into fight number five, as this photo shows Pep giving Saddler a faceful of laces.

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

CHILLING THOUGHTS

So what is a boxing columnist supposed to write about so soon after the events of September 11, 2001? In light of a group of passengers standing up to their terrorist hijackers, which welterweight do we label a "hero" this month? In the aftermath of all those police and firemen racing into burning skyscrapers, which challenger do we say displayed "courage under fire" by weathering a series of left hooks? Which upcoming pairing of two veterans is worthy of being designated a "do-or-die" matchup?

Obliterated in the inferno that overwhelmed the World Trade Center, scattered amid the rubble of The Pentagon, and smoldering in a Pennsylvania field alongside the wreckage of a crashed jetliner are all those sports cliches we loved so much. The ones that had always duped us into thinking that men throwing balls, racing cars, and, yes, even trading debilitating punches, were doing something far more noble than merely playing games.

Priorities changed quickly after planes started falling from the sky. Wasn't enduring a weekend without the NFL and a week without Major League Baseball a whole lot easier than you would have imagined? Did it matter that the Felix Trinidad-Bernard Hopkins bout was postponed for a couple of weeks? Did anyone care that the Omar Sheika-Thomas Tate main event on ESPN's *Friday Night Fights* was scrapped? Absolutely not.

So what is a boxing columnist supposed to write about so soon after 7,000 people disappear in a cloud of acrid smoke and the game he covers, like all other sports, suddenly seems so insignificant? Maybe, with the threat of terrorism still on his mind, he writes about something that has crept into his thoughts quite often during his 18 years on the beat. Crept into his thoughts, for instance, when he was staring up at a crowded balcony in Madison Square Garden, or marveling at how many rich and powerful people were hobnobbing in the outdoor stadium at Caesars Palace, or noticing that there wasn't a policeman or security guard anywhere near ringside at Joe Louis Arena.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

What if "Fan Man" had been a terrorist?

When a Beethavean Scottland dies, or a Tony Ayala Jr. breaks into yet another female's home, or a trial exposes corruption within the IBF, it might be difficult to think of the Sweet Science as a lucky business. But it has been just that, for it has long managed to avoid tragedies caused by crazy people. Not the kind of crazy people who would pilot planes into skyscrapers, but the kind of crackpots who would do something ugly with a gun, a knife, a small explosive device, or even their bare hands.

Sure, all sports are fertile ground for troublemakers. Think of jammed football stadiums or all the people crowding along the route of the Boston Marathon. The Olympics, in fact,

were subject to terrorism, in Munich in 1972. But boxing is a particularly inviting target for a number of reasons. For starters, its very infrastructure—everything from its ratings to its scoring of fights—is one of chaos and, sometimes, lawlessness. It allows its spectators to get closer to the field of play than any other sport does. It attracts the kind of fan base that, shall we say, will never be mistaken for an equestrian crowd. And as part of its promotions, it often plays up ethnic or racial differences, encourages inflammatory rhetoric, and establishes a "good guy" to cheer and a "villain" to loathe.

To anyone who's not mentally disturbed, all that stuff is just part of the game. If, however, something is amiss inside your cranium, then all of the aforementioned characteristics are ingredients in a recipe for disaster. For years before "Fan Man" decided to become the fourth man in the ring during Evander Holyfield-Riddick Bowe II, this columnist repeatedly discussed with a colleague the likelihood of a maniac interfering with a major fight. Heck, it had almost happened in 1977, when a drunk climbed onto the ring apron during the first round of the Carlos Zarate-Alfonso Zamora bout at the Fabulous Forum. Some observers got a real kick out of Fan Man's antics. But what if he had been a terrorist parachuting in with a bomb or chemical agent? What if he had landed on Holyfield, Bowe, or referee Mills Lane and caused serious injury?

On the undercard of the Muhammad Ali-Leon Spinks rematch, a woman managed to get into the ring and bare her breasts. What if she'd had a more sinister motivation? It has practically become a tradition for handlers, hangers-on, and, sometimes, fans to storm through the ropes at the conclusion of a high-profile main event. Imagine if somebody chose to use the mob scene for cover and attacked a fighter. During the riot that broke out at the conclusion of the first Bowe-Andrew Golota clash, suppose someone had assaulted Golota with a knife instead of a cell phone.

One of the theories of what happened on a spring night in Lewiston, Maine, 36 years ago is that Sonny Liston thought Ali was

Did Liston fall down because he feared a bullet more than he feared Ali?

going to be assassinated, feared that the gunman might have bad aim, and thus took a dive to escape the ring as quickly as possible. Metal detectors, like the ones at MSG for Trinidad-Hopkins, are rare at fight venues because fans haven't made a practice of emptying guns into the guys they're rooting against or the judges who've robbed their hero. But would you bet that it will never happen?

You want to talk about times when things could have really gotten scary? How about when Greg Haugen, who had relentlessly insulted Julio Cesar Chavez for weeks, squared off with the Mexican icon in front of 130,000 Chavez diehards (many of them full of tequila and venom) in Mexico City's Azteca Stadium? Think of the '88 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, and the death threats received by NBC's broadcast team of Marv Albert and Ferdie Pacheco. Every time Catholic Barry McGuigan, who was married to a Protestant, climbed through the ropes in Belfast, everyone who was watching wondered if a pipe bomb was going to go off in the arena.

What might have happened if Sheika went ahead and fought Tate in Paterson, New Jersey, just three days and a few miles removed from the collapse of the World Trade Center? It's a good thing that Mustafa Hamsho was the target of nothing more than catcalls on those nights when a Syrian flag preceded his entrance into the ring. It's frightening to think what would have ensued had that been ammonia, tear gas, or something much worse than a smoke bomb that was tossed into the ringside seats as Holyfield and George Foreman were swapping leather at Convention Hall in Atlantic City.

The Yankees' Derek Jeter doesn't pull a Bernard Hopkins and rip the Dominican flag out of Pedro Martinez' hands before facing the Red Sox ace. Pro football teams don't walk down an aisle and through the middle of a rabid crowd on their way to the battlefield. The NBA and NHL don't stage contests in unstable environments outside of North America. Boxing is indeed a sport like none other.

And thus far, it has been spared from any true horrors. Here's hoping that the "somebody up there" who liked Rocky Graziano, that Big Fight Fan in the Sky, continues to watch out for the rest of us, too. ■

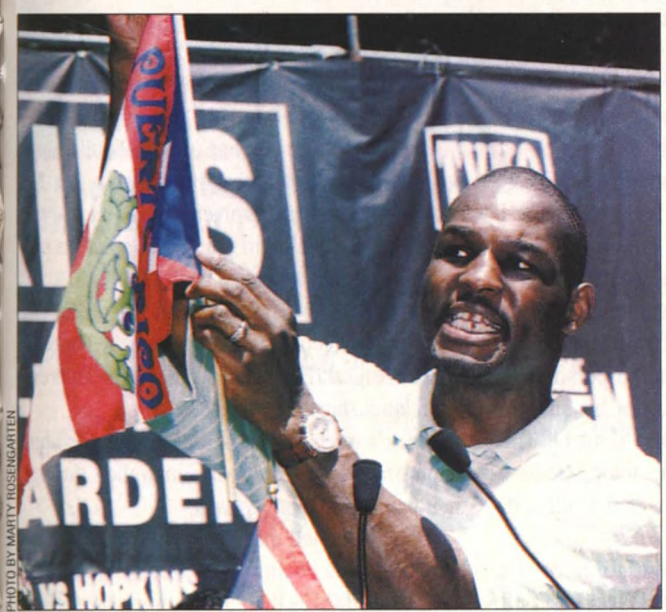


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hopkins infuriates the Puerto Rican fans

NEW FACES

JIM ROCK

Junior Middleweight

By Patrick Myler

One thing's for sure: When a guy climbs into the ring in a shocking pink gown with sequined shorts to match and answers to the nickname "The Pink Panther," he'd better be able to fight.

Irishman Jim Rock can fight all right, make no mistake. At the time of writing, he had run up an impressive 20-1 (8) professional record and was looking forward to stepping up to a higher level.

"I've served my apprenticeship and now I'm ready to put myself to the test," he said. "I have no fears about fighting anyone, even Goliath if he's still around. Maybe I'm not the biggest puncher or the most skillful junior middleweight in the world, but no one is stronger or fitter than me."

A diligent trainer, Rock is always, you could say, in the pink. On his choice of ring garb, the 29-year-old Dubliner is unfazed by the jeers and whistles that mix with the cheers as he jogs to the ring to the strains of Henry Mancini's haunting melody.

"I just happen to like pink and it seemed natural that when I was looking for a nickname I should call myself 'The Pink Panther,'" Rock explained. "At least I'm original."

Rock's rugged good looks and outgoing personality, allied to his exciting fighting style, has attracted a large fan base for the personable Irishman. Among those rooting for his success are famous showbiz figures like "Lord Of The Dance" Michael Flatley, movie actor Matthew McConaughey, and pop singer Geri Halliwell, formerly Ginger Spice.

"When the Spice Girls were going off on their world tour in 1998, Geri was looking for a fitness trainer, and I was introduced to her," said Rock. "We went jogging, worked on the mitts, and even sparred together. She loved it and put a lot of energy into it."

The gossips at the time suggested that there was more than a working relationship, but Jim denies any romantic involvement.

"Geri is a lovely girl, but it was strictly a professional arrangement," he insists.

Besides, Jim had a steady girlfriend, Belfast restaurateur Hedy Donnelly, who became his wife in August. He has four children from previous relationships.

Rock's reputation as a fitness expert led him to putting Flatley and McConaughey through their paces in Dublin gyms.

"You could tell that Michael, a real fight fan, had done some boxing," said Rock. "He showed some of the moves that made him a state Golden

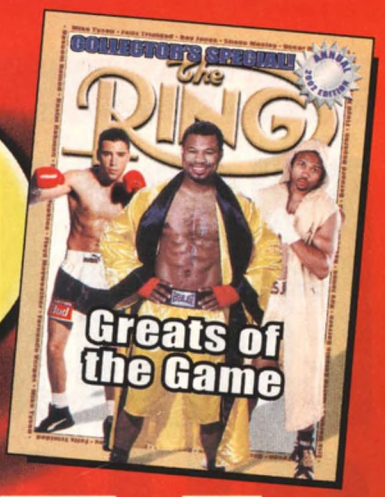
(Continued on page 62)

PRO RECORD

1995		
Nov. 25	Craig Lynch, Dublin, Ireland	W 4
1996		
March 9	Peter Mitchell, Cork, Ireland	W 6
Sept. 3	Rob Stevenson, Belfast, N. Ireland	W 6
Nov. 5	Danny Quacoe, Belfast	KO 4
1997		
Jan. 28	Roy Chipperfield, Belfast	KO 2
April 12	George Richards, Sheffield, England	W 6
Sept. 13	Robert Njie, London	KO 3
1998		
April 18	Ensley Bingham, Manchester, Eng.	KO by 7
Sept. 19	Michael Monaghan, Dublin	W 12
Dec. 14	Perry Ayers, Cleethorpes, England	KO 3
1999		
Jan. 22	Jimmy Vincent, Dublin	W 10
Feb. 20	Pedro Carragher, Middlesborough, Eng.	KO 3
April 17	Michael Alexander, Dublin	KO 1
June 19	Kevin Thompson, Dublin	W 4
2000		
April 15	Allan Gray, London	W 10
June 12	Alan Gilbert, Belfast	W 6
Oct. 20	Brooke Wellby, Belfast	KO 3
Nov. 11	Dave Baptiste, Belfast	W 4
Dec. 8	Tommy Attardo, Worcester, MA	W 8
2001		
March 24	Holly Elliott, Worcester	KO 6
April 20	Jason Collins, Dublin	W 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
21	20	1	0	8

The RING ANNUAL



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HOW I SHOCKED THE WORLD

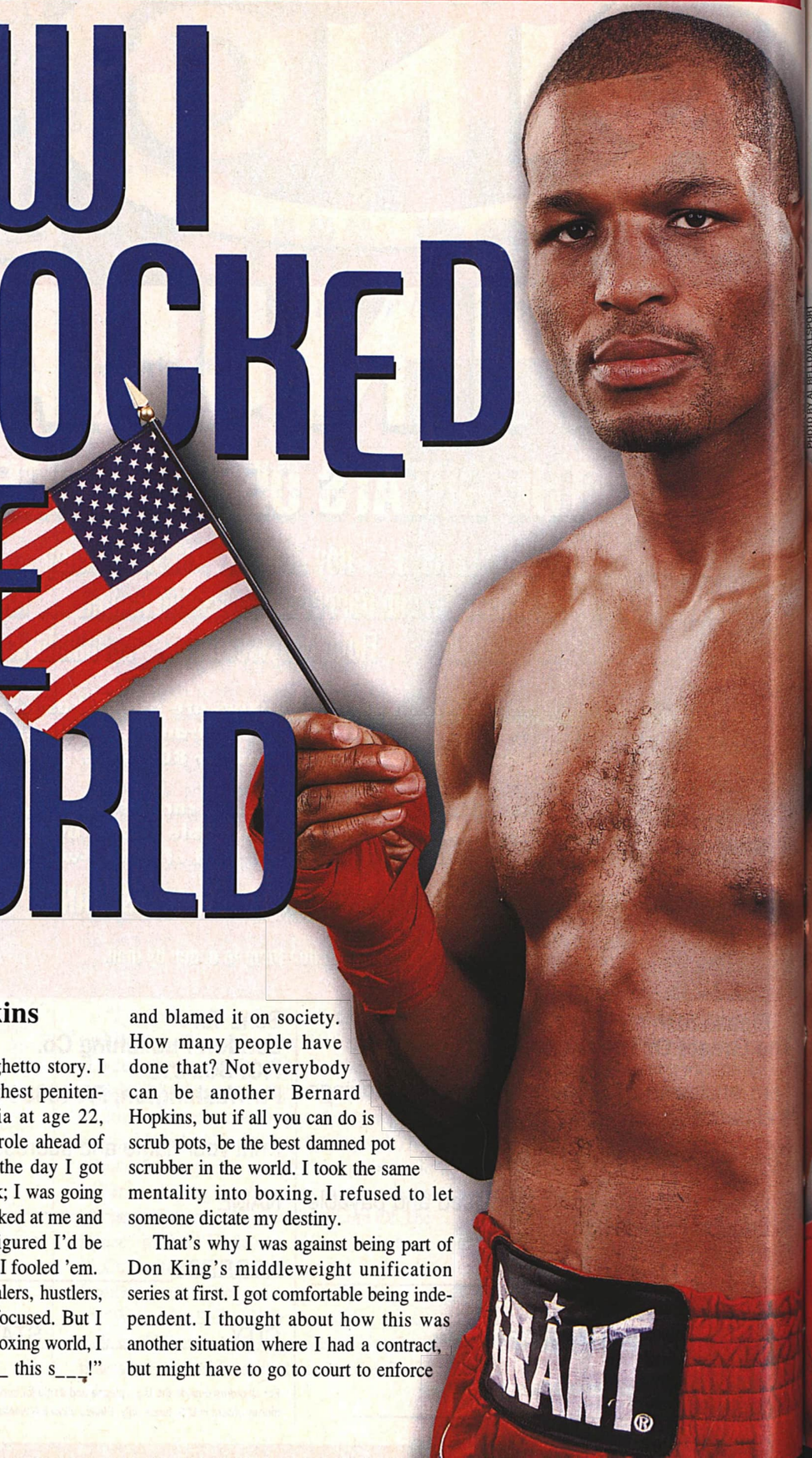


PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Trinidad reels back from a Hopkins right hand. It was "The Executioner's" accurate right, along with his jab and previously underrated boxing skills, that paved the way to victory and the undisputed middleweight championship.

By Bernard Hopkins

This isn't the typical ghetto story. I came out of the toughest penitentiary in Pennsylvania at age 22, with nine years of strict parole ahead of me. I had all these dreams the day I got out: I was never coming back; I was going to be a boxer. The guards looked at me and said, "Yeah, right." They figured I'd be back in six months, tops. But I fooled 'em.

My friends were drug dealers, hustlers, and gamblers. I had to stay focused. But I had so much adversity in the boxing world, I could have easily said, "F___ this s___!" and blamed it on society. How many people have done that? Not everybody can be another Bernard Hopkins, but if all you can do is scrub pots, be the best damned pot scrubber in the world. I took the same mentality into boxing. I refused to let someone dictate my destiny.

That's why I was against being part of Don King's middleweight unification series at first. I got comfortable being independent. I thought about how this was another situation where I had a contract, but might have to go to court to enforce it. I didn't want to go through the BS again, I didn't want to go through the broken promises and shattered dreams. But I changed my mind.

For one thing, I wanted to be undisputed middleweight champion of the world, and that was on the table in this tournament. At age 36, with my odds and options, you can say that it was a gamble. But as I look at it now, of course, it was a good gamble. I had my fingers crossed, I had my prayers said, and I had my adviser, Lou DiBella.

Lou is a very, very important person in this type of negotiation. He'd won my loyalty and trust when I fought Syd Vanderpool and Antwun Echols, the second time, on HBO. He put both the good and the bad out there, and said that the contract was going to be structured to protect me. We went back and forth. It wasn't just one or two days of persuading me. But by a week to 10 days, I made the decision. Basically, I used my old contracts, the ones that I was dissatisfied with, to work with Lou on what I wanted.

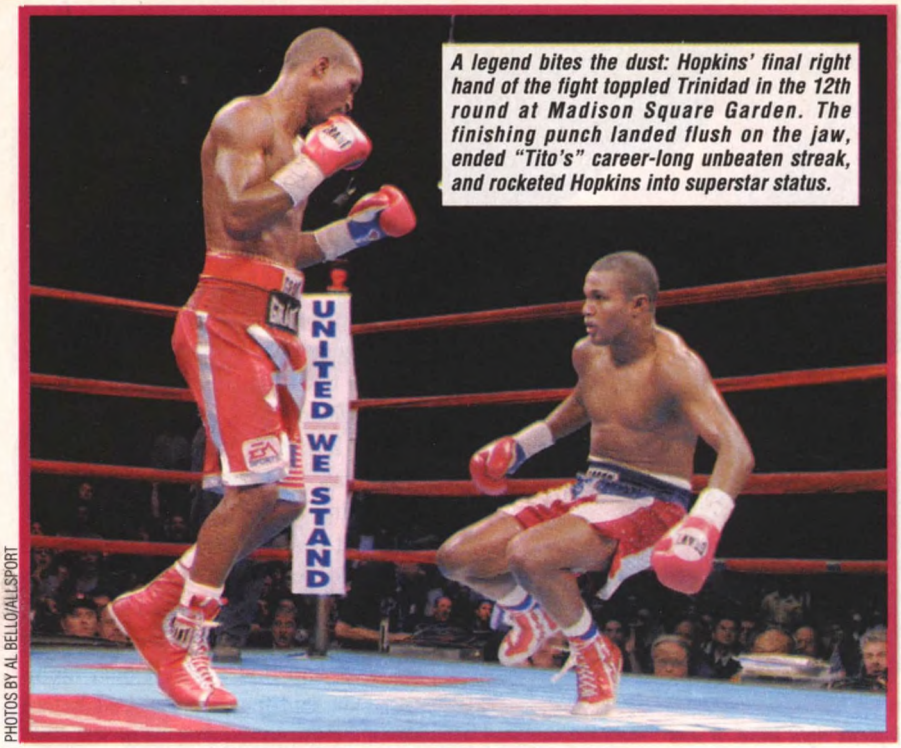
Don agreed to almost everything. Now that was too easy, and I got really paranoid. Things were being given to me every time I asked. I even got the signing bonus that I asked for. Usually, when you ask Don King for money out of his pocket, you'll get a whole speech. You know: ghetto, black, prejudice, penitentiary, we need to work together, the whole thing. He didn't do that this time. It was strictly business.

Don King gave me everything I wanted because he thought I was going to lose. Don often told me that Robert Allen, Segundo Mercado, and the seven other guys who were mandatories and Don King fighters that I fought were scared of me, and that's why I beat them. Don said they were scared before they got in the ring. Don King put all his eggs in one basket. He just *knew* Trinidad was going to beat me. There was no way he was going to let me walk away from this deal.

But the extra pressure helped me because it motivated me, even when everybody was ganging up on me. Basically, no one was giving me a chance. They were trying to set the stage for Trinidad the legend, and all these things they had set up for him, like Roy Jones. They wanted to make me out as the bad guy. Okay, if they wanted me to be the bad guy, I was going to play the bad guy role. I wanted to be the devil.

It was clear as day in my contract that I would get equal billing with whoever I fought, but I didn't get that. I was pissed off at HBO. Recently, since I won, they've apologized, and if we sign with them, they said they'd do things differently. Hey, Trinidad was a great champion, but I'm worthy of the same respect. Why do I have to wait to get the respect until after I beat Trinidad? I'd been champion for 6½ years and had 13 defenses.

I was being bombarded with disrespect. HBO Pay-Per-View had me come in to their studio on a Sunday to start off the city tour, New York to Philadelphia to Miami to San Juan. We started with the photo shoot for posters, commercials, the whole nine yards. The shoot started at 12 noon. No exaggeration, I didn't leave until 8:15



A legend bites the dust: Hopkins' final right hand of the fight toppled Trinidad in the 12th round at Madison Square Garden. The finishing punch landed flush on the jaw, ended "Tito's" career-long unbeaten streak, and rocketed Hopkins into superstar status.

PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

that night! They wore me out. My lower back, from standing up in so many different poses, was killing me. Trinidad came in for two hours at best.

But I didn't go crazy. I didn't say anything. I told my crew, "See, it's starting now. But this is not going to be a Trinidad tour, while I take the back seat." I'd seen William Joppy do it for six days, and that was something that I wrote down in my mind. I said to myself, *I've got something for them in New York.* And what agitated me more was when Tito's father got up there and said, "We believed it before and we still believe that Joppy was the best middleweight in the world."

I was pissed. That's why I grabbed the Puerto Rican flag and threw it down the first time. They thought I was someone they were going to use as a steppingstone, but I knew better. I'm contracted to Don King, but you couldn't tell it at the time. All he was saying was "Viva, Puerto Rico!" And we're still in New York. When we got to Miami, it was "Viva, Puerto Rico!" again. Man, I was tired of it.

What I did, throwing the flag down again in San Juan, wasn't promotional. I didn't get any extra pay-per-view money. And I wasn't even thinking about getting into Trinidad's head. You think I'd go to San Juan, Puerto Rico, in front of 14,000 people, and throw a flag down after Tito warned me not to, just to get publicity?

People have to understand that, even though I don't live like that no more, I will always have that mentality in my heart and soul to be aggressive if I choose. I never forget how I used to live and how I used to be. I don't brag about it, and I paid a price for it. But in the fight game, it's paid off for me for not to be passive. I've got to have two personalities in boxing. I can be kind and talk to you. I don't beat my wife. I don't spank my 2½-year-old daughter. I don't go out and take advantage of people because I'm Bernard Hopkins. But I can never forget those days, and I can easily revert to those days when I'm being challenged and tested.

I've seen a lot of riots. I've seen riots in the yard at Graterford, but it wasn't nothing like that. When I saw Tito's fans coming after me, I thought, *Oh, s___!* They were all around us. There were people taking pot shots at me as I was running and ducking. A guy came at me with a 2 X 4. I don't know who it was. He swung and missed. I'm lucky he wasn't a baseball player. He's coming at me and talking Spanish, and I'm dodging and dodging, but instinct took over. I hit him with a right hand. The stick went one way, and I went the other.

After I jumped down out of the stands, we got into a little room and the cops locked the door with handcuffs. It reminded you of a horror movie. *Boom! Boom!* The door bulged as they pounded on it. But after they trashed the limos, it started pouring down rain. Some left, but there was still a crowd out there cussing, hollering, throwing bottles.

They didn't get us out in a helicopter like it said in the papers. The way they did it reminded me of when President Reagan got shot, how they rushed him into the car. My whole crew, including Bouie Fisher, my longtime trainer, was upside down, somebody's butt was over here, somebody's feet over there. It was like we were being sniped from some building, and we just had to get out of the area. That's how it was.

When we drove to the airport, there was even more chaos. They were following us, giving us the finger. When we got to the airport, there was no checking in. We only had three first-class tickets going down, but they wanted us out of there so bad, everybody had a first-class ticket going home. I didn't feel safe until we saw Philadelphia, because even the guys outside the plane in San Juan, the guys wearing the orange vests, were giving us the finger. I was thinking, *Wait a minute, man. They know I'm on this plane. Can we make it home without a spark plug falling out of the plane?*

As far as the fight was concerned, we

had a battle plan all along. We always study tapes. Bouie watched the Trinidad tapes first, and once we got in camp, we sat down and dissected everything, all the way down to what his corner says to him. Most people don't pay any attention to that stuff.

We worked on not giving him a straight target. I wanted to give him angles without running. It's like fencing. When you're fencing, you don't give the guy the whole target. Another thing we knew was that Trinidad has to plant his feet to generate power. He's one of those fighters who's comfortable planting and putting his shoulders into every punch. He's trying to hurt you. He's not a consistent jabber. He's not a rapid combination puncher because he's been led to believe that he can hurt people with one left hook or one right hand. But when he ran into me, he needed more than that, and that was why he was exposed.

Part of the game plan was for me not to get bored, even if I didn't see any progress right away. It was also part of the plan to always take that step away from him without running, because nobody wants to see you run in a big fight. We learned that from Oscar De La Hoya. I also never let him see me back down mentally. He looks you straight in your face when he boxes you. I saw his pupils. He kept that eye-to-eye contact on me. That's a way he has geared his mind to break a guy's will. When you look at a guy, even when you're beating him to death, and he's still coming, you think he's either crazy or you can't hurt him. Mental warfare has been his great asset with other fighters, but not with me.

I tricked the experts and I tricked the world because I had the people thinking that I was going to do the Philly brawl, come in and take his heart with elbows and kneecaps. That's what I was promoting. That's what they were looking for, so they trained that way. They brought in sparring partners who would put pressure on Trinidad, be a little dirty, not guys who threw four- and five-punch combinations. But in the fight, I did the opposite. And by the shocked look on his face, I knew he was thinking, *This guy isn't supposed to be moving. This guy isn't supposed to be jabbing.*

I trained at the Prince Ranch in Las Vegas seven or eight weeks before I came to New York. I miss my daughter so much,

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Trinidad never stopped trying, but like many observers, he was surprised by Hopkins' defensive ability. The defending IBF/WBC titlist either ducked or blocked most of the Puerto Rican's big blows.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Don King doesn't look too happy posing with Hopkins and the Sugar Ray Robinson Trophy (center), which the promoter commissioned to be awarded to the winner of his middleweight unification tournament. There's little doubt that King wanted Tito to have the trophy.

it hurts when I go away to camp. And even though the tragedy of September 11 was devastating, the postponement gave me a week of rest to reflect on how big the fight was. Seeing my wife and my daughter gave me that extra boost to go back to New York and face my defining moment.

On fight day, I was more suspicious than normally. Funny things have happened in New York City the last couple of years. Don King is so powerful and so influential, his presence will make somebody do something they ain't supposed to do. I knew that I had to be clean, professional, and a great technician. I knew that anything less would hurt me. If I didn't pull the fight off convincingly, if it was a close fight, then there was a chance that I wasn't going to get the nod. This was the fight where I was one foot from greatness and one foot from being retired. It wasn't about the Sugar Ray Robinson Trophy, although I admire Robinson. It was about Bernard Hopkins breaking the record, about Bernard Hopkins standing up to the powers-that-be, about Bernard Hopkins who never said I can't, about Bernard Hopkins showing up at the congressional hearings on corruption in boxing when others didn't show. All of that was banking on this fight. Everything I did, good or bad, was banked on this one fight.

I study Islam, and I prayed before the fight. One of my prayers was that if I'm victorious—and I knew a lot of people would

MASTERPIECE AT MSG

The overwhelming majority of the 19,075 fans at Madison Square Garden came to watch the supposedly invincible Felix Trinidad punish Bernard Hopkins for the numerous indignities he'd heaped upon their hero and their flag. The fact that the undisputed middleweight title was at stake had become almost incidental compared to the fiery vendetta between Hopkins and people of Puerto Rican heritage. But when it was over and Trinidad had been thoroughly vanquished, even "Tito's" most zealous supporters were awestruck by what they had witnessed. For Hopkins had not only TKO'd Trinidad in the 12th round, he'd also delivered one of the greatest performances in boxing history.

Prior to the main event, the mood had been subdued, due undoubtedly to the horror of September 11. But as the fighters made their way to the ring, the Garden came alive with noise—boos for Hopkins, deafening cheers for "Tito"—and by the time the participants were introduced, the atmosphere pulsated with an exhilarating vibe worthy of the occasion.

The 36-year-old Hopkins, a perfectly honed 157 pounds, immediately made it clear that all his trash talk about turning the bout into a back-alley brawl had been a ruse. He answered the bell with his hands high and immediately began to employ the lateral movement and skillful boxing that ultimately carried him to victory. Trinidad, cemented in the mold that proved so successful in his 40 previous professional fights, did as he has always done, applying relentless pressure.

A hint of what was to follow came at the end of the second, when Hopkins snapped Tito's head back with a right hand. Instead of firing back, the defending WBA champ clinched, a tell-tale sign that "The Executioner's" axe was sharp enough to chop down even this most revered icon.

Hopkins' left jab controlled the third, and when the first serious exchange of the fight broke out in the fourth, the Philly tough guy got the better of the give-and-take. There was more bristling two-way action in the fifth (a round in which they both fought after the bell) and sixth, and although Trinidad, 28, landed his share of punches, at no point did he seem to be taking over.

Hopkins steadily pulled ahead in the seventh, eighth, and ninth, which he swept on all official cards. His poise was as impressive as his punching, and when Trinidad, 158½, hit him low in the ninth, instead of responding in kind, the IBF/WBC titlist rammed home three jabs and a stinging one-two instead.

Trinidad's warrior instincts came to the forefront in the scintillating 10th round, as he launched a do-or-die assault. But Hopkins was not only able to stave off the attack, he completely outpunched one of the game's most feared sluggers. Hopkins, frequently fighting with his back to the ropes, was nothing short of brilliant, and when the round ended, Trinidad was virtually out on his feet, the victim of a round-long pounding and a final

go home upset if I won—that I would be humble. I promised my God that I would not be arrogant about it, and I've lived up to that and will continue to live up to it. And do you know why? Because that's who I fear. Yes, Bernard Hopkins, the ex-convict, fears Him, because I know I didn't get here by myself. I'm not trying to give a sermon, I'm just saying you have to have checks and balances. There are repercussions when you say one thing, then do the opposite.

As I made my ringwalk, I was thinking, *I'm going to kick his ass and I'm going to do it the right way. I'm not going to hit him in the cup.* Then I went in the ring and I looked at everybody. I wanted to get into the crowd. I had Ray Charles on. There were 19,000 people there.

I was told by Larry Merchant and Emanuel Steward at the HBO prefight conference that Trinidad was going to come out and try to knock me out in the first round. So I was cautious, but I wasn't overly respectful so that I gave up something. I kept my hands extremely high, higher than in any other bout I ever fought. I had respect for his power, so I kept my hands up and started to do the basic stuff, jab, jab, jab, until I got comfortable.

Late in the second round, I landed a right hand as he was going back. First, I threw a double jab. The second jab was a little short, but it got me in range to crack him up high. Probably the only reason he didn't go down was because it was up high, and the bell rung. I heard the crowd go "ooh," and saw the sweat fly, so I knew it was a good shot. But Trinidad took a good shot.

When we fought after the bell in the fifth round, if it wasn't for Steve Smoger, I'd still be hitting him. We were in the mix of throwing punches at each other, and Trinidad nailed me. I don't know if it was on the bell, before the bell, or after the bell, but he nailed me. I *had* to nail him back! Even though mine was late, I had to let him know I was still there. Even if it cost me a point, I wanted to get that last hit in before we go to our stools.

In the corner, Bouie kept saying that Tito doesn't like the jab, that he couldn't get set when I threw the jab. By the sixth and seventh rounds, when I hit him with shots I wasn't hitting him with earlier, I knew I was gaining more control. And as the fight wore on, I got stronger.

Bouie don't like me on the ropes, but he knows I can get benefits from being on the ropes. He just doesn't want me to stay there. He said that me being on the ropes was the only shot Trinidad had, because there's no back door. "Stay in the center of the ring, son, the center of the ring," Bouie kept saying. But that rebellious streak in me told me that I could get him from the ropes. I saw that when I go back on the ropes, I can crack the other guy with the right hand. Trinidad comes in straight ahead, and I've got the speed to throw a right, grab him, and spin out.

In the 10th, Trinidad caught me square on the chin with a left hook. I can still feel the bruise. That was the first punch that I felt. It didn't stagger me, but I felt the jolt. He put his whole shoulder into that shot. I thought, *I ain't gonna let him hit me with that again.* And I started firing. That 10th round was a helluva round. We both was trading. I just kept punching. That's the right uppercut that might have ended the fight had the bell not interrupted.

Somehow, Trinidad, 40-1 (33), survived further abuse in the 11th, but when Hopkins drilled him flush on the jaw with a counter right in the 12th, it was all over. Tito went down on his rump, rolled over, and after first slumping back down, bravely struggled to his feet at the count of nine. Referee Steve Smoger (USA), who had done a stellar job up to that point, hesitated momentarily, as he peered into Trinidad's glazed eyes. But the decision was taken out of his hands when Felix Trinidad Sr. entered the ring to save his son from further suffering, a move that prompted Smoger to call at halt at the 1:12 mark.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Hopkins fought extremely well off the ropes

Hopkins' dominance was reinforced by CompuBox's PunchStats, which showed the new undisputed champion had connected with 260 punches to Trinidad's 129. All three judges, Don Ackerman (USA), Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa), and Anek Hongtongkam (Thailand) had Hopkins, 40-2-1 (29) with 1 no-contest, ahead at the conclusion, by scores of 109-100, 107-102, and 107-102, respectively. THE RING had Hopkins ahead by 109-100.

(9-29-01)

—Nigel Collins

round when Trinidad laid it all out. After that round, it was over. That round was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Before I went out for the 12th round, Bouie said, "Close the show." That meant no judges if I can help it. I threw a left uppercut, not actually trying to hit him. I was just trying to brush him so he could see it whistling past him. I knew he was waiting to counter me anytime I threw an uppercut, because it exposed the top of my head. So when he saw the uppercut, he threw a left hook that missed. I countered with my favorite punch, a right cross—right on the kisser—and he went down.

I still had two minutes left in the round, and if Tito's father hadn't come in the ring and stopped the fight, I would have punished him. I wasn't even breathing hard. I could have gone 20 rounds, easy.

When I flopped down in joy, I didn't care if he got back up, because I knew I could still close the show. It was a relief from the whole past 12 years, a relief from being in the situation I was in when I was younger. The first thing I thought about when it was over was, *I've got these motherf___ers now.* I saw Butch Lewis, my old promoter who I had a bitter court battle with. I could see Dan Goossen somewhere, biting his nails, hoping I get beat. I saw all the people who did me wrong. They showed up to see me get slain. Yes, I should have been thinking about the millions of dollars I'm gonna make. But I was thinking about those enemies who were sitting at ringside. They never showed up at any other fight. It's like people showing up at your funeral, people who normally don't even talk to you. And you had an opportunity to wake up and look down on your own body, and see people you didn't like and didn't like you. They just wanted to make sure that it was you in that coffin. But they don't know that for all those years, they've been the ones who have motivated me.

I fooled 'em all. ■

THE "X" FACTOR

Nobody opened a vein, but it's no secret that a lot of people were very unhappy that Bernard Hopkins beat the hell out of Felix Trinidad to claim the undisputed middleweight championship. And we're not just talking about "Tito's" legion of fans.

Although Hopkins' popularity reached new heights in the aftermath of his stunning victory, promoter Don King and the brass at Madison Square Garden know that most of the 19,000-plus on hand for the festivities were there to support Trinidad. Ditto for the majority of the 475,000 homes that purchased the fight from HBO Pay-Per-View, which, not so incidentally, were the best PPV numbers of the year so far.

Exactly how unhappy these powerful entities were depends on who you believe. But many, including Hopkins and his adviser, Lou DiBella, think the Garden was so displeased with the result that it flirted with banning Hopkins from ever fighting in the building again. MSG denied it, of course, but lingering animosity between DiBella and Garden honcho Seth Abraham (Lou's old boss during their HBO days) adds credence to the story. King was accused of delaying giving Hopkins the Sugar Ray Robinson Trophy so that he could have Trinidad's name removed and replaced with Hopkins'. Whatever the case, the taste of sour grapes was palatable, and went a long way to explaining why we like fighters much more than we like suits.

Hopkins, who tied Carlos Monzon's division record of 14 successful title defenses by thrashing Trinidad, said that he'd like to break the record in his hometown of Philadelphia. His IBF mandatory is veteran Carl Daniels, who held the WBA super welter title for a few months back in '95. Another possibility is local rival David Reid, who would be more marketable, especially in Philly. Whatever happens, "The Executioner" will not be pulling his mask back on until early-2002.

"Right now, there's no need for Bernard to chase anybody," said DiBella. "My advice to Bernard will be to break the record against the best available fighter, then have a superfight after that. Somebody is going to need a big fight, and Bernard will be waiting for them. Almost anything is possible. Roy [Jones] won't fight [Dariusz] Michalczewski; maybe Bernard will."

PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

Sign of the times

Regardless of what Hopkins does next, it's hard to imagine looking back on the Trinidad fight as anything other than the defining moment of his career. After all, not only did he stop Trinidad, he also knocked the boxing establishment for a loop.

—NC

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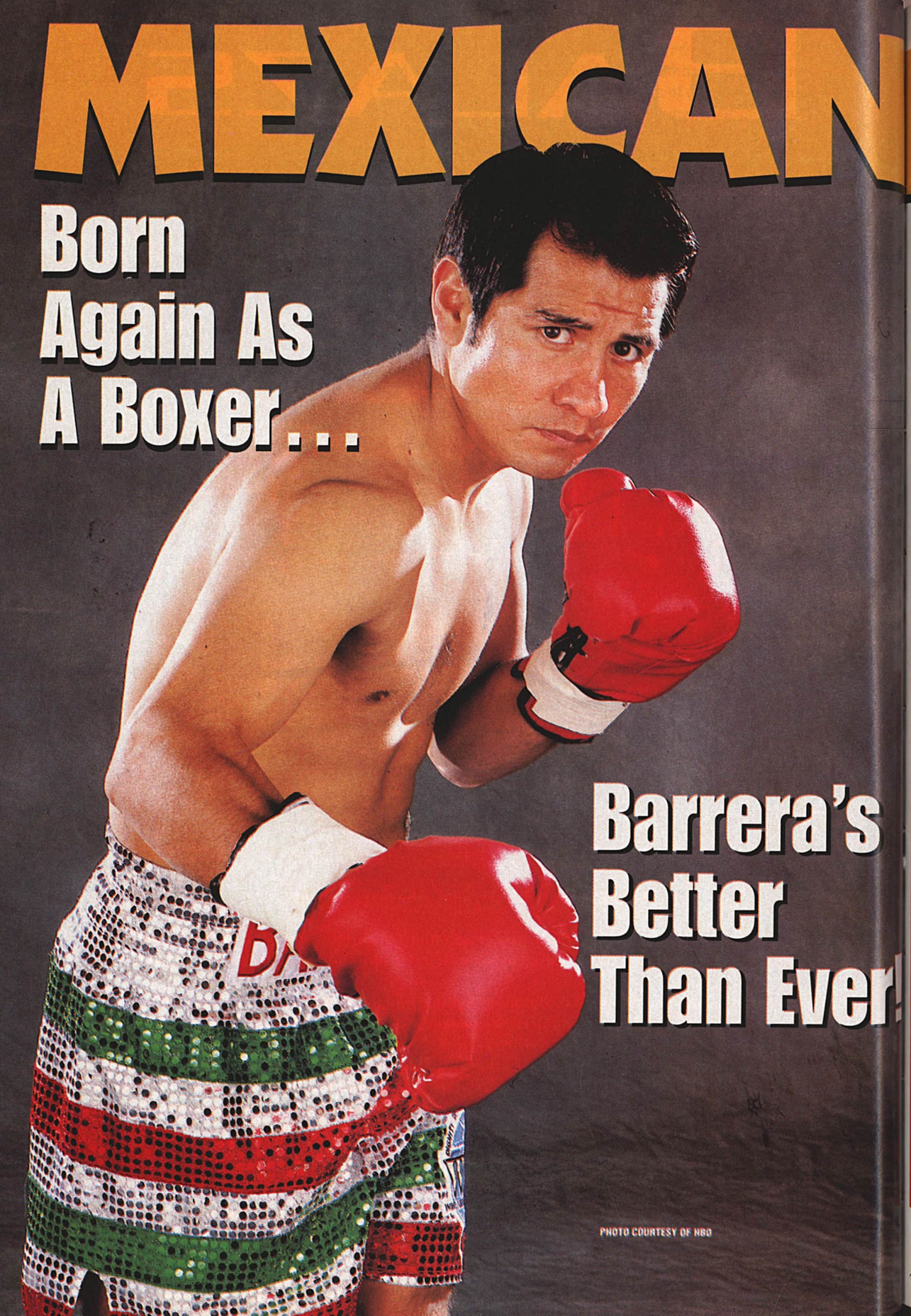

PHOTO COURTESY OF HBO

By **William Dettloff**

The culture of the Mexican fight game is strong. The fighters are bound to it and there are things they cannot do in the ring lest they betray the culture. You know what they are: Jab, move, duck. They can't be patient and they can't greet the end of a fight unmarked. Generally, Mexican fighters, by tradition and by weight of the culture, don't calculate or plan or parry. They bull. They hook. They uppercut. They beat the body. The culture demands that they embrace the streetfight and that they roughhouse. They don't move backward or even to the side very much. They bleed and scrape and grin through mouthpieces run red with their blood, and the rougher it is, the better they like it. Mexican fighters don't play.

It is no great coincidence then that many fine Mexican and Mexican-American fighters found their careers were at the end when they were young men, younger even than most fighters who find they are too old for the fight game, but just about right for everything else. You can say it's because Mexico doesn't grow heavyweights and the little guys burn out quicker than their big brothers. That's part of it. But part of it, too, is the macho.

It used to look like Marco Antonio Barrera was the quintessential Mexican fighter. He barreled through powerpunching Kennedy McKinney in one of the best brawls in a decade. He overpowered Frankie Toledo and Eddie Croft and Agapito Sanchez and a bunch of other tough junior featherweights. And so what if Junior Jones had his number? All the great Mexican heroes lost, even Julio Cesar Chavez, eventually. Chavez had Frankie Randall, and before him Pipino Cuevas had Thomas Hearns end his legend, and besides, Barrera outgutted and outbrawled Mexican rival Erik Morales even though the better-connected Morales got the decision. That fight proved, more than anything, that Barrera was not just a Mexican fighter, but Mexico's fighter. The heir to Chavez' idolatry.

Barrera had to be all Mexican. He never blinked inside the ring. Mean punches whizzed by his head all the time, and he never bothered to notice them; he was too intent on digging the hook to the liver. And so what if the other guy landed a shot or two along the way? His hook would hurt, wherever it landed, more than their right or uppercut or whatever would hurt him. Just

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Barrera surprised some with the measured way he attacked Enrique Sanchez en route to a sixth-round knockout in September. Instead of reverting to his old slugging ways, Barrera employed a boxer-puncher style similar to the one he used to upset Naseem Hamed.

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Against former WBA super bantam champ Sanchez, Barrera hardly wasted a punch, planting most of his blows exactly where he wanted them. According to CompuBox, Barrera landed 100 of the 188 powershots he threw.

like Olivares, just like Chavez, just like Cuevas, just like Zarate, just like Zamora. So he didn't bother to notice it when they punched. He didn't have to. Just like all the others. So there is no disputing Barrera's macho and his Mexican being. But he has become more than just another great Mexican prize fighter, in the mold of all the other great Mexican prize fighters, and he's done it by breaking two of his fight culture's oldest tenants; indeed committing blasphemy, when you think about it.

Barrera, 54-3 (39), hasn't burnt out yet. He hasn't gotten fatally sick of handwraps and heavybags, of mouthpieces and leather ropes. He's not yet disgusted by the smell of the gym or of morning runs through the mountains. He's been in the game long enough to hate it, but he doesn't. He started making money in a prize ring when he was just 15, an age when most American fighters are still busy with trophies and headgear, an age when half the guys you see on *Friday Night Fights* had no idea they'd ever be fighters. But in Mexico, where in most cities the economics dictate that the young and able-bodied earn their keep—but not where Barrera grew up, interestingly—it's usual.

"Fighters turn pro early in Mexico," said longtime West Coast fight figure and Hall of Fame promoter Don Chargin. "A lot of them are fighting 10-rounders when they're 15, 16 years old. It's expected."

What's also expected is the flip side of engaging the hardest game at such a tender age, if you believe that the young men who escape from Mexico's poorest barrios have the time or a chance to be tender at all.

"They don't usually last as long as Barrera has when they turn pro that young," added Chargin. "Usually, they're burnt out by the time they hit their early-20s."

Barrera has been a pro for 12 years. He's only 27 years old. He's a world-class fighter with more than 50 fights and is probably in the latter half of his physical prime. He hasn't burnt out or broken down, hasn't tired of the training or complained of a chronically sore back or brittle hands or half of the other maladies that afflict guys who age too fast on the Mexican and West Coast fight circuit. He's not riddled with scar tissue and he hasn't slowed. All that time and all that living in the ring, and he's still young and he fights young. Indeed, gauge his speed and his punch and see if he doesn't throw like he did when he was 24. He fools you because he has no right to be as young and good as he is, not with all those fights and all that know-how.

"I was talking to a guy about Barrera after the Enrique Sanchez fight," said Aaron Snowell, trainer of IBF bantamweight king Tim Austin, who if we're very lucky, will someday figure into Barrera's future. "I forgot how young he is. I was thinking he was like 30 or 31, then I remembered he turned pro real young. He's been around so long it seems like he should be a lot older than he is."

Certainly, judging by how long we've been watching him, it seems that Barrera should be on his way out by now. It's not just that he fought a few times on network television, back when you could find a fight or two on a Saturday afternoon once or twice a year. But remember that his breathtaking struggle with McKinney was telecast on HBO's inaugural *Boxing After Dark*. Even at that time Barrera was a seasoned guy, not a bit of green on him. And now, dozens of *B.A.D.* cards later, here he is, still, somehow, the same guy, even better in ways.

True, Barrera's not been ground down by the fights that have taken place since McKinney, not even the brawl with Morales, which, it seems, may have had a more damaging effect on the winner than it did the loser. But after all those wars, why is he not an old, worn 27, pulling away where he used to charge, freezing where he used to strike? Why has he not hit the same

It was his unforgettable struggle with Kennedy McKinney in 1996 that introduced many fans to Barrera. The magnificent see-saw battle, which Barrera won via 12th-round knockout, launched HBO's **Boxing After Dark** *in spectacular fashion.*

wall that so many fighters hit when they start too young and then find out all at once what they've been missing?

"I think part of it is he believes deep down he's sort of been chosen to be the next great Mexican fighter," said HBO's Larry Merchant. "He suffered real setbacks in the Junior Jones fights, but they slowed him down and gave him the time to restore himself emotionally and mentally over a couple of years. Then he came back and had that great fight with Morales, which was like a crusade for him almost. It helped him recapture the approval of the Mexican boxing fans."

If the losses to Jones helped to extend Barrera's prime by convincing him to take time off, the second fight especially, which Barrera dropped by a hair after 12 nip-and-tuck rounds, gave his career new life. In that match he recognized the folly of charging headlong into Jones' right cross, and instead boxed meticulously. The judges didn't get it; they liked Jones' showier right hands, so Barrera lost anyway. But it was a hell of a lot better than getting starched, which was what happened the first time (even if the official

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Barrera's two fights with Junior Jones can be seen as turning points in the Mexican's career. After failing to outslug Jones in their first encounter (pictured), Barrera boxed in the rematch, and although he lost a close decision, proved he was a skilled craftsman.

ruling was a disqualification win for Jones).

Barrera, it was shown, could box. It wasn't part of the culture—Salvador Sanchez notwithstanding—and it wouldn't go over big with the Mexican fight fans, not at first. But everyone loves a winner when he's wearing their flag. Eventually, Barrera would ride virtually the same kind of tactful, patient fight to the biggest win of his career: his upset victory last April over Naseem Hamed. One could make the case that the seeds for that victory were sown in the rematch with Jones.

"Barrera was always more of a boxer-puncher than just a straight brawler," observed Chargin. "He just used to get himself all worked up going into a fight and didn't box, even though he could. Early on he just used to walk through those guys. The Jones fight got him thinking he could box. And he was right. He can."

Snowell thinks so, too, but suspects that changing styles so radically is not something even a gifted fighter like Barrera can do on the fly.

"Sometimes a successful fighter will get locked into a style because it's been successful for him, but eventually he finds out that styles make fights. So if he's going to continue to be successful, he has to work hard to make the adjustments to beat certain types of styles. He made the adjustments and beat Hamed by boxing instead of slugging. And now he's kind of locked into that style because it was successful."

PHOTOS BY TOM CASINO

More of the same? This is how Erik Morales and Barrera looked after their epic first fight, which went to Morales via controversial decision. Now the two Mexican warriors are headed for a rematch in March 2002.

Snowell is right. Barrera hasn't brawled since the Morales fight. In his December 2000 tuneup for Hamed, he patiently and methodically picked apart the useful if well-worn Jesus Salud in six rounds. There were no wild exchanges, no mid-ring flurries. Just quiet, restrained aggression. Then came the brilliant, controlled showing against Hamed that belied Barrera's attachment to the Mexican fight culture, but at the same time cemented his standing as a Mexican hero. Barrera's sixth-round stoppage of the capable Sanchez in September also featured more boxing than slugging. Probably he could have taken Sanchez out around the same time or earlier with his old bruising style if he pushed it and mixed in some bodyshots. But he took his time and broke him down slowly. Maybe it was his best performance yet, if you like watching a man come apart one punch at a time.

"What he did against Sanchez was something of a revelation because he showed such fine technique and counter-punching skill," Merchant said. "It was really high-class boxing that he was doing, and we didn't know he had that in him. In the Hamed fight, he trained for it; in this fight it was something else again. He'd evolved into what Shane Mosley calls power boxing."

Merchant believes Barrera's transition to boxer-puncher rather than brawler is not simply a plan that was forged to beat Hamed, but now has become difficult to undo.

"It's a rare transition. More often than not, all-out fighters who are successful have short, fiery careers," said Merchant. "They fight in that way because quite often it's an expression of their temperament. Very few can change that, but Barrera is an uncommonly intelligent young guy. I think he knew he wasn't going to be able to fight too much longer if he kept fighting the way he did in the Morales fight. He saw, in his mid-20s, that he had a second chance at greatness. He wants it so badly, he decided to use his head and not just his heart."

Soon, Barrera and Morales will sign to meet again, and if you think they've reversed roles, you're right. Going into the first fight, Barrera, without a noteworthy victory to point to after the losses to Jones, was thought to be damaged. Morales, meanwhile, looked near invincible. Now it is Barrera who appears unbeatable and Morales hasn't had an easy fight since before the struggle with Barrera. He looked so shaky against In Jin Chi in July—this after barely surviving Guty Espadas five months before—that promoter Bob Arum said in the days that followed that he would let his tiger take no more tuneups before facing Barrera again.

That's called protecting your investment, and you could hardly blame Arum for that. He knows his guy isn't Mexico's fighter anymore, if he ever was, that Barrera has won the hearts of his countrymen. He knows the culture doesn't count for everything, that, as Barrera has shown, you can break some of the tenets and still thrill the masses, that you don't have to burn out fast and young. After all, Morales also knows the rules of the culture, and he too is more boxer-puncher than brawler, though he can go either way as well. They have that in common. The problem for Morales is that Barrera is better at both. The best ones always are, culture be damned. ■

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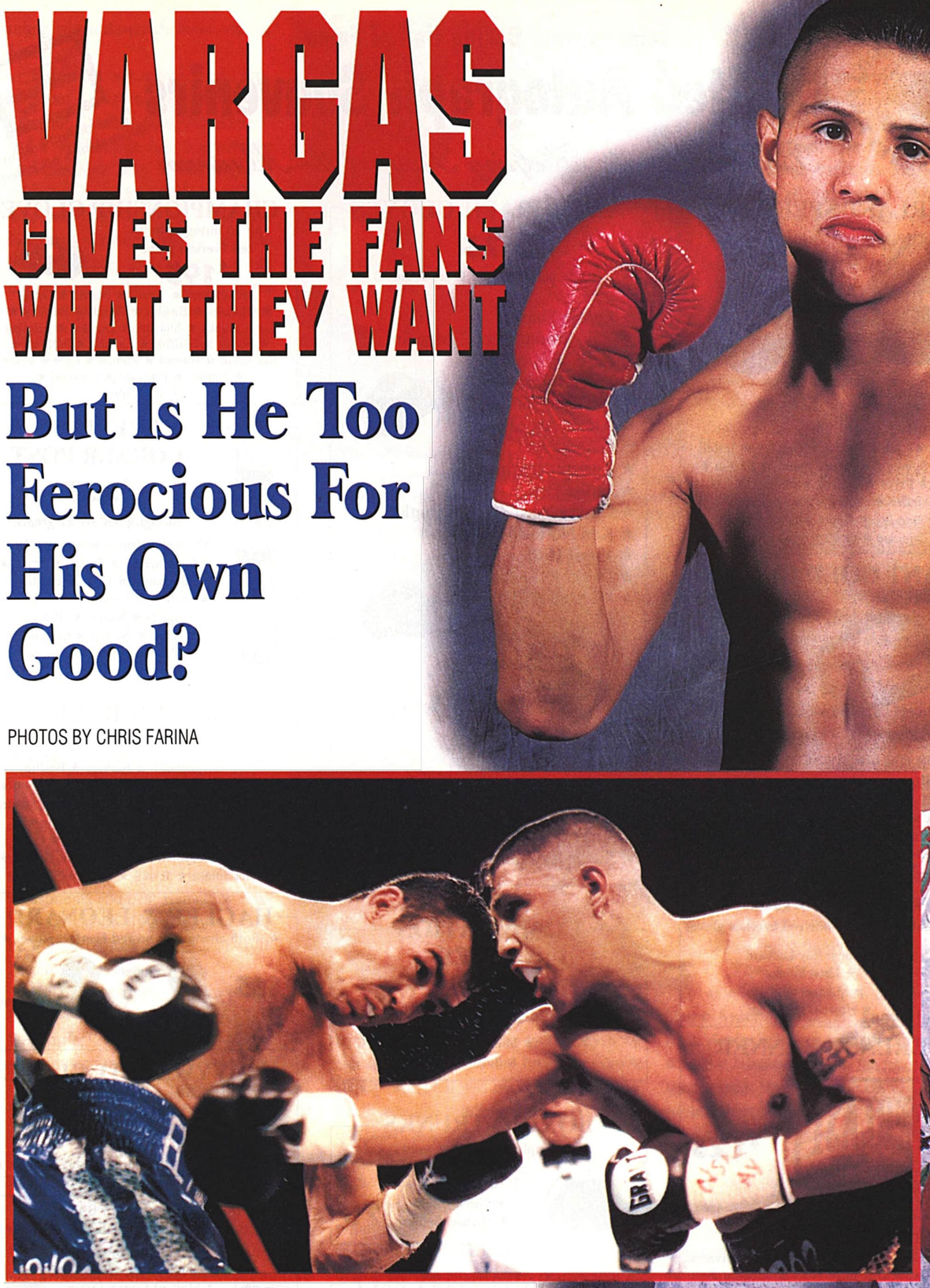
PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA



After taking some early punishment, Vargas softened up friend and former sparring partner Flores with bodyshots (above) and then finished him off with blows to the head (opposite top) for a seventh-round knockout. The win raised Vargas' record to 22-1 (20).

By Jeff Ryan

"Ferocious" Fernando Vargas wouldn't call what he has an identity crisis because, well, he's never been one to view anything as a crisis. That includes all sorts of setbacks, from having his pro debut delayed four months after suffering a broken hand, to struggling to a disputed decision over Winky Wright. From being sentenced to jail for assault, to being kayoed by Felix Trinidad. From getting floored by feather-fisted Wilfredo Rivera in a comeback bout, to having Oscar De La Hoya change his mind about signing on the dotted line. The day Vargas admits to a "crisis" will be the day his Ferocious Mobile, that 30-foot converted Lexus SUV that features a fish tank, mirrored ceiling, electric fireplace, smoke machine, and lasers, starts getting 40 miles to the gallon.

What's clear, though, is that Vargas does have some identity issues. What label, after all, do you stick on him? He's a little bit of everything, but he's not the poster boy for anything. Vargas is a fine boxer, but plenty of fighters are more stylish. He can hit pretty hard, but lacks the one-punch power of the game's best bombers. His rap sheet looks like a Post-it note compared to those of the game's true bad boys. And even though he has far too much attitude and moxie for a 23-year-old, he's not even boxing's most outrageous character. Johnny Tapia has more tattoos. David Tua has funnier hair. Prince Naseem Hamed says nuttier things. Sure, Vargas once tried to spit at an opponent. But Mike Tyson once spit out part of an ear.

"Everyone describes Vargas one way or another, but there is no description," said HBO analyst and Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward. "He's an intelligent guy who says stupid s___. A good boxer who doesn't use footwork. A fighter who throws short powerful punches with perfect leverage, but still isn't a devastating hitter."

Added ESPN analyst Al Bernstein: "Sometimes that lack of an identity even impacts Vargas in the ring. He was a boxer-puncher against Trinidad when he should have been just a boxer. Other times, he has boxed too much. He often doesn't know what he's supposed to be in the ring, but his skills have gotten him through."

Perhaps we'll never know quite what to call Vargas, but we do know what to call his fights: fan-friendly, funky, and fun. And nothing that unfolded during a seventh-round knockout of his former spar-

Ferocious attack: One of the main things that has made the 23-year-old Vargas popular with the fans is the way he lays everything he has on the line every time he ducks between the ropes. Win or lose, "El Feroz" gives people their money's worth.

ring partner, Jose "Shibata" Flores, at Las Vegas' Mandalay Bay in September changed that opinion.

This is the era of watered-down titles. To fans who have Saturday night entertainment to plan, or to an HBO that is willing to write a $1-million check, it's often more important who the fighter is than what he's fighting for. That the win over Flores gave Vargas the WBA super welterweight crown that was vacated by Trinidad wasn't nearly as significant as the fact that one of the game's most entertaining combatants distanced himself a little more from his only defeat and crept a bit closer to another major fight.

"How am I coping psychologically with the loss to Trinidad?" Vargas said, repeating a question that clearly annoys him. "I'm only 23. I don't need any mental recovery."

Watching Vargas get wobbled a few times by the wild, chopping shots of the southpaw Flores, it's clear that the two-time 154-pound king is suffering at least some lingering effects—physical, mental, or both—of his vicious war with Trinidad last December. In the showdown that revealed Vargas to be just as much grit as glitz, Ferocious battled fearlessly before succumbing in round 12. But he absorbed some nasty low blows, hit the floor five times, and suffered the kind of bruising and humiliating pounding after which some fighters are never the same (see David Reid).

Against Flores, though, Vargas was able to overcome his early shakiness. Abandoning his usually effective jab, he relied on crisp counter left hooks (one of which dropped Shibata in round two) and a vicious body assault. Vargas, 22-1 (20), was wobbled in the second round and stunned again in the fourth and fifth, but he hurt Flores with both hands to the body in the sixth and raked him with punches at the bell. Breathing heavily and unable to keep his rival at a distance, Flores, 42-9 (24), found himself pinned against the ropes late in round seven. After taking a barrage of shots to the body and some glancing blows to the head, he crumpled to the canvas and was counted out by referee Joe Cortez at the 2:59 mark. While the final assault didn't appear to be the kind that would force a fighter to take the count, Flores apparently sensed that his situation was hopeless soon after Vargas began opening up his attack and applying more pressure.

"I'm a perfectionist, so on a scale of 1-to-10, my performance gets a six," said Vargas. "Some people want to say that I got hit too much, but Shibata knows me and my style. No matter what I did in that fight, I'd get criticized. If I knocked him out in the first round, people would be saying, 'That's nothing. He just beat his old sparring partner.'"

Bernstein said, "The part that's distressing to me is that I don't think Shibata showed any confidence at all during the press conference leading to the fight. His attitude was that he was thankful Vargas was providing him with the payday. There wasn't a lot of fire in him and he still was able to give Vargas some trouble."

And Steward added, "Vargas looked very hittable, and that's not good when you're in a division with as much talent as junior middleweight. But it was awkward for him to fight a friend and sparring partner, so it's hard to judge him off of that fight."

Prior to the bout, there were whispers that Vargas might already be, just four years into his career, a shot fighter. Being unable to get out of the way of the slow punches of Flores only adds credence to that argument. But if you overlook the second-round knockdown Vargas suffered

Many believe Vargas hasn't been the same fighter since his brutal 12th-round knockout loss to Felix Trinidad in December '00 (pictured). Against both Wilfredo Rivera and Flores, Vargas proved alarmingly easy to hit, and even suffered a shocking knockdown against Rivera.

after being caught with what Steward calls "a perfect right hand," the six-round stoppage of the durable Rivera was fairly impressive. And if Vargas really was in freefall, wouldn't WBC titlist De La Hoya have gone ahead with their proposed December 8 showdown rather than abruptly cancel it without a plausible explanation?

"He realized I'm a big, strong 154-pounder, that's why he pulled out," said Vargas. "Oscar hit [Francisco] Castillejo with everything but a baseball bat and couldn't do anything with him. I'd walk right through De La Hoya. Tell him if he doesn't want to step up and unify the title, then he should step out of the division."

As always, Vargas remains more obsessed with getting his mitts on an Oscar than Tom Cruise. He can forever find a way to work De La Hoya into the conversation, no matter if the topic is potential megabucks fights or the price of home heating oil. Ask Vargas what he would have done differently against Trinidad, and he replies, "I should have boxed right from round one." He pauses, then adds, "But I still gave Trinidad the fight of his life. Who else did that ... without running?"

Uh, that last question wouldn't be a dig at a certain native of East L.A. who goes by the nickname of "The Golden Boy," would it?

"You said the name," says Vargas. "Not me."

Unable to pin down his fellow Mexican-American for now (and possibly for quite a while) Vargas says he'd like a rematch with Wright. In most cases, a world champion with marquee opponents in his future wouldn't want Wright in the same time zone, let alone the same ring. After all, Wright could have been given the decision the first time, his slick style makes anyone he fights look bad, and he won't guarantee Vargas an eye-popping purse or make Ferocious Fernando's resume look that much more impressive.

But we're not talking about most cases here. We're talking about Vargas. For every potential fan who has been turned off by his ostentatious mode of travel or the chip that seems to have been surgically grafted to his shoulder, there are probably two that have pledged their undying support to Vargas simply because he hasn't stuck to the blueprint of the modern-day champion: Hide from tough challengers as though they're detectives and you're on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list.

Vargas was 19 when he turned pro, and barely 21 when he won the IBF crown by making rugged veteran Yory Boy Campas quit. Within the past 2½ years, he has faced Raul Marquez, Wright, Ike Quartey, Trinidad, and Rivera. When Vargas says he wants to lift the cloud hanging over the first Wright bout, or calls out De La Hoya, or expresses a desire to evict Shane Mosley from the penthouse suite of the pound-for-pound ratings, he's not just talking trash. He's making legitimate plans. (Of course, those plans may be temporarily on hold. In September, Vargas was sentenced to 90 days in jail after pleading no contest to charges of conspiracy to commit assault. The legal problems stemmed from a 1999 incident in which a man was beaten in Montecito, California, by Vargas' cousin and three of the fighter's friends.)

"Tough fighters have always made me

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOP RANK

Fighting Oscar De La Hoya has become an obsession with Vargas. But "The Golden Boy" has already pulled out of one fight with him, so Vargas will probably fight Winky Wright next, providing Wright beats Robert Frazier for the vacant IBF 154-pound title first.

rise to the occasion," said Vargas. "Even on my worst day, Winky Wright couldn't beat me. He caught me at a time when I had to eat egg whites for a week to make weight. I'll knock him out this time. And I'll beat Mosley and Oscar, too, because I'm bigger than them. Mosley's speed impresses me, but I can adapt to his game. Nothing about Oscar impresses me. Nothing."

Unlike De La Hoya the businessman or Mosley the artist, Vargas views his fights as tests of his machismo. He's in the ring not because he wants to finance a side venture or film an instructional video disguised as a title bout, but because he views himself as a true warrior. Combine that battle mentality with his often-sloppy defense, questionable chin, and killer instinct, and you've got a kid who might have been the matinee idol of his era if the commercial networks were still tapping into huge sports budgets and regularly airing boxing on Saturday afternoons.

"I'm a great entertainer," said Vargas. "I put on a great show and give people what they want to see: somebody laid out. I always looked up to a fighter like Julio Cesar Chavez because of all the Mexican fans he had. It's nice to know a lot of those fans like me, too. Kids walk up to me and tell me that they got a Fernando Vargas haircut, and that's an honor. I think the reason I'm popular is that everyone knows I'd give up my life in the ring. Lots of guys say that, but the public can tell that I mean it."

Said Bernstein, "Vargas' fights with Trinidad and Ike Quartey were absolutely riveting, and few of his fights have been bad. Vargas has pizzazz and he's cocky, but he's not like Hamed. Most boxing fans don't tune in hoping that he loses. And the casual observer will always be happy he watched because Vargas fights have plenty of action.

"You could picture Vargas eventually becoming the Arturo Gatti of the junior middleweights, though, and that's a danger for him. His camp made a big point about how he'd be a smarter fighter against Shibata, and that wasn't the case. He can't get into a slugfest every time out, especially if he moves up to middleweight one day."

Tell Vargas his career expectancy is short, however, and be prepared for a verbal salvo no less intense than the physical one he unleashed on Flores in the last two rounds. He'll be quick to remind you that he's only 23, that he has been beaten only once in 23 outings, and that the defeat came in one of the best fights of the year. And he'll tell you that he still has some surprises planned for the big shots that inhabit the neighborhoods of 154 and 160 pounds.

Referee Joe Cortez raised Vargas' arm after the Flores fight, which earned the pride of Oxnard, California, the WBA super welterweight belt. The Vargas-Flores bout was the first major fight since terrorists attacked the U.S. on September 11.

It all sounds like the usual fighter's talk—until you remember who's doing the talking. Whether it's the thoughts he has in his head or the desire he has in his gut, the kid has a way of laying it all out there for us, doesn't he? Except for the plastic fish swimming in the Ferocious Mobile's aquarium, there's nothing phony about Fernando Vargas. ■

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Klitschko, V	$95,000	Holmes, K	$90,000	Holland, J	$70,000	Dorin, L	$70,000	Marquez, J	$100,000
Klitschko, W	$110,000	Hopkins, B	$175,000	Jantauh, K	$85,000	Grigorian, A	$95,000	Morales, E	$120,000
Lewis, L	$130,000	Joppy, W	$100,000	Kotiev, A	$85,000	Harris, V	$70,000	N'Dou, P	$80,000
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Harding, E	$100,000	Castillejo, J	$85,000	Hatton, R	$80,000	Cassamyor, J	$130,000	Johnson, M	$90,000
Harmon, D	$85,000	De La Hoya, O	$160,000	Hlbk Pdrsn, D	$80,000	Castillo, A	$80,000	Jorrin, W	$105,000
Johnson, G	$50,000	Farnell, A	$40,000	Hurtado,D	$80,000	Chavez, J	$105,000	Lacierva, J	$65,000
Johnson, R	$90,000	Karmazin, R	$60,000	Judah, Z	$150,000	Forbes, S	$100,000	Ledwaba, L	$80,000
Jones Jr., R	$200,000	McKart, B	$100,000	Julio, E	$95,000	Freitas, A	$130,000	Machado, F	$110,000
Kelly, G	$95,000	Ouma, K	$90,000	Leija, J	$65,000	Gainer, D	$100,000	Marquez, R	$70,000
Letterlough, J	$75,000	Quartey, I	$90,000	Mitchell, S	$100,000	Garcia, R	$75,000	Montiel, F	$80,000
Lewis, B	$50,000	Rask, M	$50,000	Oliveira, R	$80,000	Gomez, M	$40,000	Morales, D	$75,000
Michaelczewski	$110,000	Simms, Tr	$80,000	Reid, T	$60,000	Hernandez, C	$40,000	Morel, E	$130,000
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Taylor, W	$75,000	Thiam, M	$70,000	Tszyu, K	$150,000	Pearson, L	$90,000	Romero, D	$50,000
Vanderpool, S	$95,000	Vargas, F	$140,000	Urkal, O	$90,000	Peden, R	$70,000	Sanchez, Ag	$80,000
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TEENAGE SENSATION

FRANCISCO BOJADO

Is He As Good As Everybody Thinks?

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Bojado moved his record to 7-0 (7) with a first-round blitz of Jesse Varela, who brought a solid 19-3 record into the contest. That bout was in El Paso, Texas, where the fans really took to Bojado. "Panchito" responded by spending 90 minutes signing autographs.

By Kevin Iole

When Francisco Bojado was eight years old, he loved nothing more than playing a game of tag. It was his favorite thing to do to pass the time.

But the game lost a lot of its luster for his friends after they played with him a while. They found it nearly impossible to tag him. The baby-faced Bojado would stand in front of them and wiggle his hips, shake his shoulders, pivot left and spin right. It was as if he was the invisible man.

"Oh, that was so much fun," Bojado recalled. "Just running around, being free, that made me so happy."

On his eighth birthday, he put the skills he learned in his friendly games of tag to good use. He was in a Southern California park as part of his birthday celebration when he wandered into the boxing room of a gym located on the park grounds. He was asked if he wanted to spar with some of the other boys his age. He had never put on a pair of gloves before, but he willingly complied. He was not, however, so certain what to do. So, he just decided to do what he did when he played tag.

"I was moving around and dodging the punches and I didn't get hit a lot," Bojado said. "I remember that so well. It was like I was playing tag again. Ever since that day, I wanted to box."

Bojado was a basketball and football player of some renown in Commerce City, California. He started on the Garfield High School football team at wide receiver as a freshman and he played on the varsity basketball team as a sophomore. But while he had considerable skills in those sports, he was quick to forsake them. There was something about being a boxer that brought him back day after day.

"It was a test, a different test every day," Bojado said. "Every day, there was a challenge and it was up to me."

And meeting those challenges helped Bojado get addicted to the sport. He quickly became the best fighter around at his age and he began to box in competitions. He fought for the glory, in part. But mostly, he fought for the trophies.

"From the time I was a little kid, I always wanted to have a big room full of trophies," Bojado said. "That was always a goal of mine. So I would win these tournaments and get trophies and it really made me feel good and want to go on."

There figures to be plenty more baubles coming his way in the months and years to come. Bojado is just 18, but the lightweight already fights with the poise and maturity of a 10-year veteran. He has all the qualities that made Oscar De La Hoya a superstar—the boyish good looks, the

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Bojado was unknown to most fans and media types prior to his pro debut, but that changed when he kicked off his career by destroying Detrick Castor in two rounds. That fight was televised by Showtime, and Bojado became an instant attraction because of it.

friendly nature, and the killer instinct.

Main Events made a big splash and signed a number of the 2000 Olympians, but Bojado, who represented Mexico in Sydney, has clearly moved to the head of the class. There are others in that group who have shown considerable promise—Main Events promoter Gary Shaw could go on all night extolling the virtues of Jeff Lacy, if given the opportunity—but there are none who have both the skills and the intangibles of Bojado.

Bojado has that certain something that makes people want to talk about him. He has the sense of timing that every star needs. He knows when to smile and he knows when to play it tough.

"The kid has a quality I can't put my finger on, but you can see it and sense it when you're around him," Shaw said. "What makes Madonna the superstar that she is? I don't know that she's a better singer than everyone else. I don't think she's a better dancer than everyone else. But there's something there. People want to see her.

"I think that's the way it is with Bojado. He's got the star appeal like an Oscar De La Hoya. He smiles the right way or makes the right gesture and people just love him. I'll never forget it in El Paso (where Bojado fought on September 1). He had a line of people waiting for his autograph that took him an hour-and-a-half to get through. And he's just 18."

Don't be mistaken: While Bojado may be a pretty boy outside of the ring, he is nothing less than a thug inside of it. He has a lethal mix of speed and power.

"He's a kid who is going to get better and better and who really has the possibility to be a big factor down the road," said ESPN boxing analyst Al Bernstein.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Though Main Events has a solid stable of young prospects, there's no question that the explosive Bojado is their crown jewel. Prior to the September 1 card in El Paso, Bojado posed for this picture with stablemates (from left) Jeff Lacy, Rocky Juarez, Juan Lazcano, and Juan Diaz.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Against Ernesto Fuentes, Bojado finds himself in what has quickly become a familiar position: staring down at a fallen foe. To have such power at age 18, when his body is still maturing, is truly remarkable.

Bojado has won each of his first seven fights by knockout and has fought only a total of 11 rounds in those seven fights. Matchmaker Carl Moretti said he is struggling to find opponents for Bojado. He said fighters have turned down career-high purses rather than fight him. Moretti said Bojado is, in many ways, a matchmaker's worst nightmare. Moretti wants to find adversaries capable of giving him a test, but he doesn't want to overmatch him. He spends hours on the phone looking for opponents. He is hoping to get veteran Jorge Paez into the ring with Bojado, but even for the $100,000 Main Events is offering, Paez, who is at the end of a long and colorful career, is not desperate enough to say yes.

"The kid has so much talent, there aren't many guys out there who are in his class," Moretti said.

Veteran trainer Roger Bloodworth, who works with a handful of Main Events fighters, but not Bojado, said Moretti had better resist the urge to put Bojado in too tough too quickly. Bloodworth isn't suggesting a diet of stiffs, but he said many promoters have made the mistake over the years of rushing a hot prospect. Bojado, Bloodworth says, is a superstar in waiting. But he feels it will take deft handling to in fact turn him into a superstar.

"He can become a really good fighter, a terrific fighter, as long as they take their time with him and don't push him too fast," Bloodworth said. "He just turned 18, and time is his friend right now. He's got nothing but time. He's not a guy on the back side of his career who needs to move. He's a kid with everything ahead of him.

"He has extremely quick reflexes and a great sense of distance. He always puts himself at the right distance. Distance is one of the hardest things to teach, but he's at the right distance to land his punches.

That sense of distance is something that even the legendary Pernell Whitaker never had—at least not as acutely as Bojado. Whitaker was a master at making an opponent miss, but he didn't always force the opponent to suffer the full consequences for the miss.

"The thing I see about Bojado is, when he makes a guy miss, he just barely misses," Moretti said. "Because of that, he's right there in the proper position to land his stuff. Pernell and Zab [Judah], they'll make a guy miss by a mile sometimes. And that's good, but when they do that, they're out of position and they have trouble landing something of their own. Not

(Continued on page 46)

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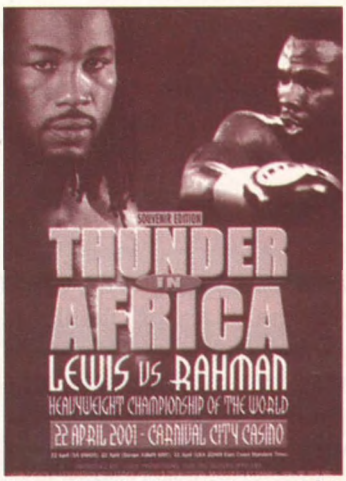

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Francisco Bojado

(Continued from page 45)

this kid. You miss and you pay the price against him."

Bloodworth said Bojado's power is not yet what it should be, though he said he felt that by the time Bojado is 20, he'll be a feared puncher. However, Bloodworth may have a hard time selling that point to Mario Lacey, who was knocked out with a single Bojado uppercut during an April 20 fight in Atlantic City. The shot broke Lacey's nose and left him wondering where he was.

It wasn't the power of that shot that most impressed Shaw, however. Shaw wasn't at the fight, but he spoke with Bojado shortly afterward and was amazed by what the then-17-year-old had to say.

"I think the difference between the guys who are just good and those who become great is that the great ones see things in slow motion," Shaw said. "That's the only thing I can put my finger on. I was talking to him about the Lacey fight, and he told me that he went to throw a left hook to the body. He said as he did, he looked and saw Lacey's hands spread wide apart. He changed in midstream and threw the uppercut that knocked him out. That's incredible, when you think of it. Mere mortals aren't able to do that kind of a thing."

Bojado just shrugs it off as part of the job. He is a kid who still thinks like a kid. He grew up dreaming of being the Mexican version of Muhammad Ali. He idolized Ali, Sugar Ray Robinson, and Sugar Ray Leonard, and he now measures himself against those men.

"I'm just a nice guy," he said. "I'm a talkative and energetic guy who is proud to be brown. I'm a bad guy, but I'm still pretty."

He laughs at his own words. He's still learning this star business and he's still working out a few of the kinks. But he's achieved enough kink-free in his brief time as a pro to leave Moretti shaking his head.

"He has incredible speed, and to my way of thinking, that's the best asset a fighter can have," he said. "He's poised beyond his years. He's a great counterpuncher, which is rare in a kid coming up.

"I had never seen him before he turned pro. And when I saw him, it was like, 'You're kidding? He's with us?' I could see right away that we were talking about someone with a chance to be special—very, very special."

Bojado, skipping rope prior to his pro debut in January 2001, trains with enthusiasm and loves the sport of boxing. Most agree that unless there's a hidden flaw, such as a weak chin, the 18-year-old Mexican-American is bound for superstardom.

Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward simply said "Wow," at the mention of Bojado's name. Shaw said that is the reaction he gets from most people who see Bojado the first time.

"[Boxing writer] Steve Kim came to me after one of his first fights and said, 'I believe he will be equal to or bigger than Oscar De La Hoya,'" Shaw said. "Think about that for a minute: Look what Oscar has done and everything he has accomplished, in and out of the ring.

"But I don't think he was wrong about it, either. He's fearless, he loves it, and he improves every day. We talk to the guys after he gets out of the gym and they tell us they can see from one day to the next the improvement. And he's the fastest fighter I've seen."

Bojado said he won't let the adulation and the talk go to his head. He said he knows that everybody loves a winner, but that they're also quick to jump off the bandwagon when things aren't going great. Bojado has a love affair with the sport, and he won't be derailed or deterred by his press clippings.

"Sometime, many years from now, I want somebody to say, 'Yeah, I remember going to watch that Bojado guy fight and was he something,'" Bojado said. "That would be kind of fun. But I have a lot of things I want to accomplish first and I'm not thinking of any of the other stuff. All I want for now is to get the job done." ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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HOW BOXING RESPONDS TO NATIONAL CRISES

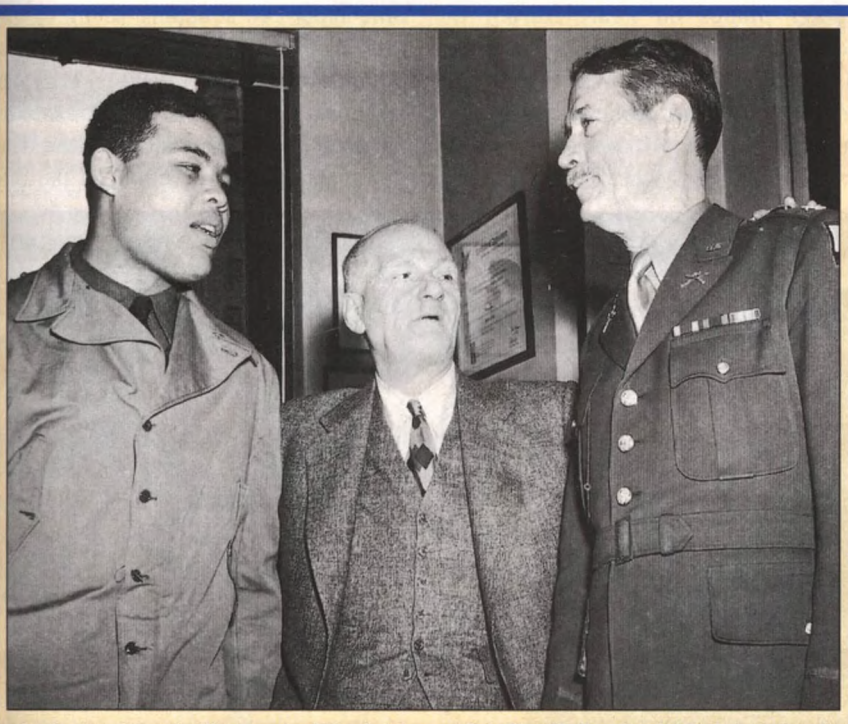
When World War I broke out, heavyweight champion Jess Willard telegraphed President Woodrow Wilson, saying he was ready to fight for his country. But when offered a commission in the reserves, Willard was touring with a circus for a fee of $1,000 per week, and never enlisted.

By Pete Ehrmann

The decision to postpone the much-anticipated Felix Trinidad-Bernard Hopkins fight, originally scheduled for just four days after the September 11 terrorist strike against the United States in New York City and Washington, D.C., hardly raised an eyebrow among the media that was otherwise engaged in a hand-wringing debate about whether the cancellation of Major League Baseball and National Football League games for a weekend was proof of the triumph of evil. One moronic drive-time jock went so far as to wonder why he should be deprived of the Green Bay Packers for a Sunday when the strip joint near his house remained open for business the weekend after the worst carnage on U.S. soil since the Civil War.

The middleweight unification fight was not the only live boxing scrapped in the wake of the attack. The Efren Hinojosa-Jauquin Gallardo bout scheduled for September 15 in Las Vegas was shelved,

Willard (far left) further alienated the public by signing to defend the title against Fred Fulton (far right) while the war was still raging in Europe. The outcry was so intense, the fight was eventually scrapped by promoter J.C. Miller (center).



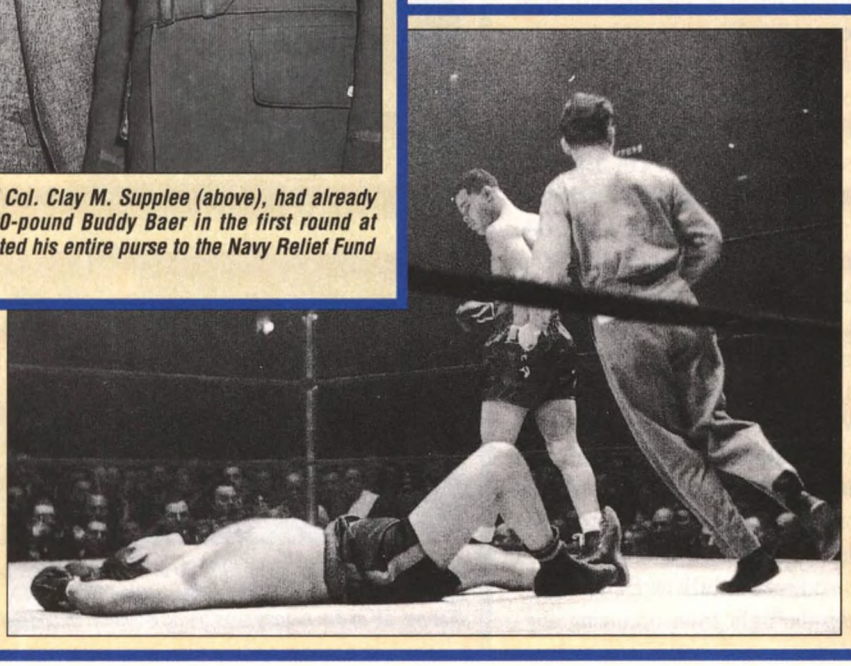
Joe Louis, pictured with promoter Mike Jacobs and Col. Clay M. Supplee (above), had already registered for the draft when he knocked out 250-pound Buddy Baer in the first round at Madison Square Garden in 1942 (right). Louis donated his entire purse to the Navy Relief Fund and enlisted in the U.S. Army the day after the fight.

It wasn't the first time boxing has been relegated to undercard status by a crisis in the world. Even in the palmy days when it was on the front pages much more than today, boxing was knocked off them by calamities caused by man or nature.

Jess Willard, "The Pottawatomie Giant," delivered the sport from what some considered the calamity of having a black heavyweight champion by knocking out Jack Johnson for the title in 1915. Two years later, when President Woodrow Wilson signed a declaration of war against Germany on April 6, 1917, Willard sent the Commander-in-Chief a telegram that read, "I am ready to fight for my country. When do you want me?"

A 6'6" and 250 pounds, Willard looked big enough to take on the Hun by himself, and win. But the next day, when the government wired back that a commission in the military reserves was waiting for him, Big Jess was off fulfilling a circus engagement for $1,000 a week. A week later, he told the press that he'd been rejected for service because he was "too big."

That was news to the Army, which could find no record of an attempted Willard enlistment and said it would gladly accept the heavyweight champion anytime. Willard's sudden silence made him even more conspicuous than his size, and it was soon reported that "military authorities are losing their patience with boxers who are using publicity about their intended enlistment for personal advertising."



and the previous night, on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*, the slated match between super middleweights Thomas Tate and Omar Sheika was abandoned in favor of taped reruns of the Julio Gonzalez-Julian Letterlough and Micky Ward-Emanuel Burton brawls, while an appropriately subdued Max Kellerman repeatedly alluded to the irrelevance of boxing in a world gone nuts.

Willard wasn't the only one. While even college track meets featured athletes tossing hand grenades with the pins removed as training for military service, professional boxers weren't exactly tripping over one another to get into the war. Many, however, did eventually end up as fitness instructors in military camps.

The heavyweight champion wasn't much for fighting anywhere, including the ring. In two years, Willard had defended the title only once. When he finally did announce, in March 1918, that he was ready to box again, after a year of growing public resentment and ridicule over his failure to join the war effort, it didn't arouse the public anticipation that a match with Fred Fulton would have received any other time. But it did arouse the public.

Called "The Minnesota Plasterer," Fulton was also a big man—6'4", 220 pounds. Earlier that year, he tried to cash in on the anti-Willard sentiment by claiming the title on the grounds that Willard was "bamboozling" the public. The trouble was that nobody noticed a military uniform on Fulton, either. In fact, even in boxing there was large doubt about the Plasterer's fighting heart, which he failed to dispel in his fight with Frank Moran by letting Moran hit him "26 times to his head and face to show he was not yellow," according to sportswriter Paul Purman.

The day after he and Willard signed to fight on July 4, 1918, at a site to be determined, outraged newspapers throughout the country printed ballots on their front pages for readers to fill out, clip, and return. "Where shall they fight?" asked the ballot, "1) In a ring in America. Or, 2) In the trenches of France." Not surprisingly, the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of France.

The halls of government also echoed with denunciations of the match. "There is a place on the Western Front for all men who demand the right to fight," declared Governor Julius Gunter of Colorado in barring the fight from his state. Representative T.L. Blanton introduced a bill in Congress to stop the fight from occurring anywhere.

When it finally landed in Minnesota, new ballots appeared in newspapers beseeching Governor Burnquest of that state "for the sake of patriotism" to "not allow Minnesota's fair name to be besmirched by this Willard-Fulton slap at Americanism." Within several days, the inundated governor announced that "a boxing match is not the proper way to celebrate Independence Day when the nation is at war."

After unsuccessful attempts to put the bout elsewhere, on May 10, promoter J.C. Miller finally called the whole thing off, and newspaper editorials celebrated America's escape from "such a wanton desecration of the loftier purposes to which the country is now dedicated."

By 1941, the country's attitude had changed. The surprise attack by Japanese fighter planes on Pearl Harbor on December 7—the catalyst for American involvement in World War II—did not stop boxing or other public entertainments. Just a day later, top 135-pound contender Bob Montgomery stopped Jimmy Garrison before 5,000 fans in Philadelphia, and soon-to-be lightweight champ Beau Jack lost to Freddy Archer in New York, while other bouts went on as scheduled around the country.

"I believe boxing is good for morale," said Mike Jacobs, the era's top promoter, "and I think that business will go on as usual."

That was largely the case, at least for a while. Two days after Pearl Harbor, a contingent of U.S. Navy officers plus the Coast Guard Band greeted Buddy Baer at Penn Station when the California heavyweight arrived in New York to start training for his fight with champion Joe Louis at Madison Square Garden on January 9, 1942.

Unlike the Willard-Fulton mess a world war ago, there was no public outcry this time about two strapping young fellows showing off their fighting wares in a boxing ring instead of the field of battle. For one thing, Louis had already registered for the draft, and the day after the Baer fight, the champion would enlist in the U.S.

Dr. William Walker gives Billy Conn and Louis their prefight physical prior to their rematch in 1946. There had been an attempt to make the return fight in '42, but it turned into a scandal when it was discovered that not all of the money was being donated to charity, which postponed the fight for four years.

Reigning light heavyweight champion Gus Lesnevich was one of several titlists who joined the armed forces during World War II. After October 1942, the National Boxing Association froze the titles until the war was over, so Lesnevich didn't defend until May of '46.

Army; and for another, his entire purse of $47,100 for the fight, along with the net profits of $37,229, went to the Navy Relief Fund.

Boxing was patriotic again. In front of more than 18,000 spectators, Baer went out at 2:56 of the first round, as Louis, to quote editor Nat Fleischer in THE RING, "tackled his opponent as the Yankees will shortly do to the sneaky, slimy, yellow rats of Japan."

The Army Relief Fund received $132,430 on March 21, when Abe Simon fell in six rounds to the champion, who also inspired the country by declaring America would win the war "because we're on God's side." But Louis wasn't the only unabashed patriot in boxing. World champions Gus Lesnevich, Tony Zale, and Freddie "Red" Cochrane also enlisted in the military. "No longer is there danger," wrote Dan Daniel in THE RING, "that some of the embarrassment to which boxing was subjected in 1917-'18 will come up again."

But then one did. In fact, Fleischer called it "the greatest fiasco in the history of boxing" after U.S. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson himself canceled a heavyweight title match between Sgt. Louis and Corp. Billy Conn scheduled for October 12, 1942, at Yankee Stadium.

The War Department had originally given its wholesale approval to the rematch of the 1941 prewar fight in which Conn had come close to beating Louis. The reason for the government's approval was the announcement that the entire gate, envisioned at $1.2-million, plus both boxers' purses, would go to the Army Emergency Relief Fund. A committee of famous sportswriters, including Grantland Rice, Bill Corum, Dan Parker, and Bob Considine, calling itself War Boxing Inc., was promoting the fight, with Mike Jacobs as consultant.

Louis was already training at Pompton Lakes, and Conn at Jacobs' estate in New Jersey, and $300,000 in ticket orders had already come in when a bomb dropped on the whole promotion. On September 18, it was reported that contrary to the original agreement whereby "no private interests would receive any financial benefit" from the fight, it had been quietly arranged that $59,805 owed by Louis to Jacobs, $34,500 owed the promoter by Conn, and the champion's outstanding $41,146 debt to one of his managers, John Roxborough, would be paid out of the fight till.

Immediately a New York congressman named O'Toole demanded an investigation into the "favoritism" shown some members of the armed forces ((i.e. Louis and Conn), and demanded a halt to all prize fights for the duration of the war. Pronouncing himself "shocked" by the disclosure, Stimson personally looked into the matter and then announced on September 25: "I have determined that Sgt. Barrow [Louis] and Corp. Conn shall return at once to their military duties. The standards and interests of the Army do not permit the proposed contest to be carried out."

On October 16, the National Boxing Association, then the sport's main ruling body, announced that titles of champions in the service would be frozen until the war was over. Louis didn't defend again until 1946, when he stopped Conn in eight rounds.

November 22 fell on a Friday in 1963. That evening's weekly fight telecast sponsored by the Gillette razor blade company over ABC was to feature unbeaten (9-0) light heavyweight Johnny Persol vs. ninth-ranked Allen Thomas from Madison Square Garden. But the Garden remained dark as America and the world mourned the assassination of President John F. Kennedy earlier that day in Dallas. One week later, Persol won a decision over Thomas.

The Vietnam era was a turbulent one for boxing because instead of quarreling with the Vietcong, heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali was doing it with his own government. Already unpopular in mainstream America for his embrace of the militant separatist Black Muslims, Ali waded deeper by criticizing America's involvement in Southeast Asia so stridently that a proposed 1966 title defense against Ernie Terrell was bounced out of several cities, including Ali's native Louisville, Kentucky, when veterans' groups objected. That fight was canceled, and Ali's next four bouts were on foreign soil.

When Ali refused to be drafted into the military on April 28, 1967, he was summarily stripped of his championship by the various governing bodies on the grounds that his refusal to serve was "detrimental to the best interests of boxing." After three years in professional limbo, Ali came back

in 1970, and would eventually regain the title. His conviction for violating the U.S. Selective Service Act was reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Surprisingly enough, Ali and the feds were in the same corner a decade later when another crisis erupted that affected not only boxing but all amateur sports in America. The Soviet Union had sent more than 70,000 ground troops into Afghanistan to prop up the regime of President Babrak Marmel. The United States backed the Afghan rebels opposing him, and when President Jimmy Carter proposed a boycott of the Moscow-hosted Olympic Games in '80, the very first endorsement of the controversial idea came from the Muhammad Ali Amateur Sports Club, founded and supported by the ex-champion.

On January 17, the 32-member organization consisting of top amateur boxers and track athletes announced its support of the boycott that would keep all American athletes out of the 1980 Olympics. Two days earlier, Ali himself had attended club meetings in California to urge the action.

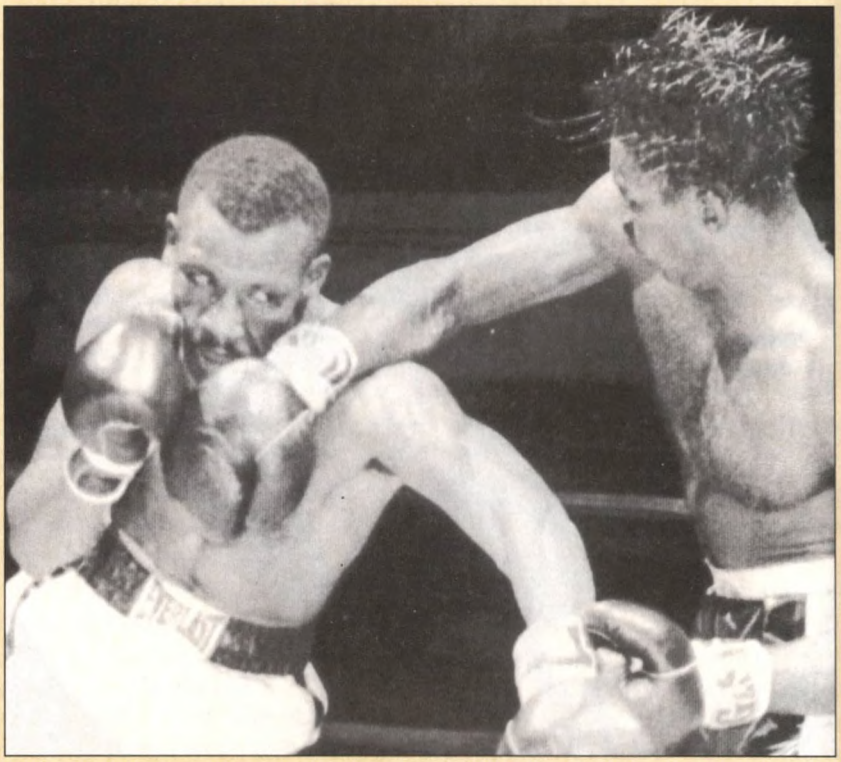
"Our kids are going to do what Muhammad Ali wants them to do," explained executive director Harold Smith (who, several years later, was responsible for his own seismic calamity in boxing by embezzling $24-million from Wells Fargo to bankroll a series of extravagant ring promotions). "It's that cut and dried."

Of course, boxing has probably perpetrated as many crises and injustices, if not more, than it has suffered. There were the race riots and deaths that followed the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries heavyweight title fight in 1910, the influence of mobsters who kept deserving fighters away from titles and bled dry some who won them, the machinations of the various alphabet groups, the ear-biting of Mike Tyson, and much more.

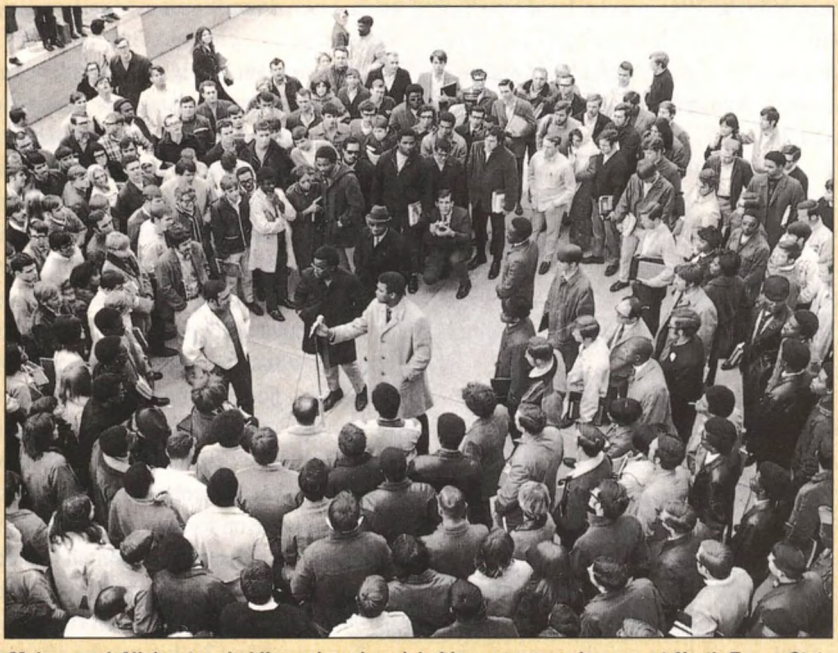
But usually when somebody in the fight game shoots something, it's only his own foot. Compared to what else is going on in the world nowadays, boxing seems fairly civilized and even worthy of the ode penned in 1904 by a cauliflowered old pug called Con O'Leary, whose last stanza went:

Where' er goes the glove of the boxer
There vanishes the pistol and knife;
Men rely on the weapons of nature
And a premium's placed on life.
That's why I am in the profession—
No doubt there are some who will blame,
But a gentleman can be a boxer
For boxing's a gentleman's game. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this publication.



When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Johnny Persol (right) and Allen Thomas were scheduled to fight on TV later the same day. The bout was postponed until the next week, when Persol won a 10-round decision.



Muhammad Ali (center, holding microphone) holds a press conference at North Texas State University to thank the U.S. Supreme Court for reversing his draft-dodging conviction. Refusing to join the armed forces during the Vietnam War had forced Ali out of boxing for three years.

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Putt . . . Jimmy Ellis (L) chips on 18th green and Juan LaPorte (R) poses with golfers.

VIP COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Stars . . . Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Hector "Macho" Camacho pose for reception guests, while Angelo Dundee (R) receives red carpet welcome.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Paul Spadafora and Sugar Shane Mosley work out for the public on Museum grounds.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Reminiscing. . . Alexis Arguello (L) reunites with Ruben Olivares (R).

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Mike Tyson KO 7 Brian Nielsen
Monte Barrett W 10 Robert Davis
Lawrence Clay-Bey KO 5 Gary Winmon
Ray Mercer KO 2 Brian Scott
Vaughn Bean KO 2 Larry Carlisle
Terrance Lewis W 10 Frankie Swindell
Oliver McCall KO 1 Matt Green
Razor Ruddock KO 10 Egerton Marcus
Luan Krasniqi KO 3 Youri Yelistratov
Andre Purlett KO 2 Jeremy Bates
Joseph Chingangu KO 2 Herbie Hide
Eliecer Castillo KO 2 Onebo Maxime
Nikolay Valuev W 12 Kipa Tasefe
Talmadge Griffis D 10 Dale Crowe
Ross Puritty D 10 Sedreck Fields
Willie Chapman W 10 Cliff Couser
William Guthrie W 8 Terry Porter
David Defiagbon KO 4 Reynaldo Minus
Faruq Saleem KO 2 Mike Rouse
Atilla Levin KO 3 Troy Weida
Kali Meehan KO 3 Justin Fortune
Tue Bjorn Thomsen W 12 Rob Calloway
Willi Fischer W 12 Joseph Akhasamba
Albert Sosnowski KO 3
Stanislav Tomkatchov
Keith Long W 10 Mike Holden
Garing Lane KO 5 Tony Halme
Malik Scott W 6 Louis Monaco
Audley Harrison W 6 Derek McCafferty
Calvin Brock KO 5 Craig Brinson

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Acelino Freitas drills Alfred Kotey with a hook

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Jean Marc Mormeck W 8 Franck Edmunson
Michael Nunn KO 1 Carlos Bates
Jason Robinson KO 4 Jose Luis Rivera
Carlos Cruzat KO 3 Muslin Biarslanov
Rudiger May KO 2 Mohamed Ali Bouaroui
Mohamed Ben Guesmia KO 2
Jesper Kristiansen
Damon Reed KO 5 Allen Smith
Michael Simms W 10 Robert Roberts

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Clinton Woods W 12 Yawe Davis
David Telesco KO 7 Faustino Gonzalez
Alejandro Lakatus KO 2 Anton Lascek
Kamel Amrane W 10 Joe Siluvangi
Lester Jacobs KO 2 Darren Covill
Andrei Kiarsten W 12 Butch Lesley
Jim Murray KO 3 Melusi Khoza
Randy Griffin Tech. Win 5 Rodney Moore
Prince Badi Ajamu KO 3 Robert Marsh
Jeff Lacy KO 3 Tyler Hughes

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Byron Mitchell W 12 Manuel Siaca
(Retains WBA Title)
Joe Calzaghe KO 4 Will McIntyre
Thomas Tate KO 4 Omar Sheika
Charles Brewer W 12 Fernando Zuniga
Markus Beyer W 10 Shannon Landberg
Syd Vanderpool KO 5 Arthur Allen
Vinny Paz W 10 Tim Shocks
David Starie KO 6 Neil Linford
Jurgen Brahmer KO 2 Rudi Lupo
Danilo Haussler W 12 Vincenzo Imparato
Will McIntyre KO 8 Jesse Marsh
Jerry Elliott KO 2 Andile Tshongolo
Sidney Msutu KO 9 Nordin Ben Salah
Ronald Boddie KO 3 Fike Wilson
Jemeel Wilson D 8 Bobby Heath
Damon Hague KO 2 Dean Ashton
Jeff Lacy KO 3 Scorpion Bawa

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bernard Hopkins KO 12 Felix Trinidad
(Unifies World Title)
Yory Boy Campas KO 5 Roni Martinez
Erland Betare KO 1 Edwin Murillo
Bert Schenk KO 5 Julio Cesar Soto
Fathi Missaoui W 8 Johnny Rivera

Wayne Parr KO 5 Abdul Rasheed
R.J. Karsten KO 1 Ameth Aranda

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Fernando Vargas KO 7 Shibata Flores
(Wins Vacant WBA Title)
Winky Wright W 12 Robert Frazier
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Steve Roberts KO 7 Andrej Butowicz
Danny Perez W 6 Amado Navarro
Takaloo KO 1 Scott Dixon
Nick Acevedo W 10 Carlos Bojorquez
Richard Williams KO 3 Andrew Murray
Tony Badea W 8 Wayne Harris
Anthony Farnell KO 2 Lee Blundell
Pasquale Perna W 10 Alvaro Moreno
Joya Kawai W 10 Nobuhiro Ishida
Lorenzo DiGiacomo KO 10 Sergej Tsupko
Jorge Araujo W 10 Jose Ramon Escriche

WELTERWEIGHTS

Thomas Damgaard KO 3 Freddy Rojas
Antonio Diaz KO 9 Orlando Hollis
Michele Piccirillo W 12 Rafael Pineda
Jawaid Khaliq KO 5 Jacek Bielski
Carlos Baldomir W 12 Hassan Al
Michele Orlando KO 7 Sergey Bashkirov
Alessandro Duran W Disq. 5 Douglas Bellini
Chantel Stanciel W 8 Ted Worth
Rev Santillan KO 6 Kenji Go
Neil Sinclair W 6 Viktor Fesetchko
Miguel Figueroa W 8 Mambea Bakari
Jauquin Gallardo W 10 Rogelio Castaneda
Kermit Cintron KO 4 Andre Baker
Matthew Hatton KO 3 Marcus Portman
Muhammad Abdullaev KO 2 Rey Pelonia
Ricardo Williams KO 4 Joshua Smith

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Steve Johnston KO 6 Brad Jensen
Vivian Harris W 10 Jose Juarez
Ricky Hatton KO 5 John Bailey
Khalid Rahilou KO 1 Ferenc Szakallas
Mike Stewart KO 6 Manard Reed
Noel Cortez W 10 Bolillo Gonzalez
Francisco Bojado KO 2 Eleazar Contreras
Manuel Fernandez KO 3 Allan Vester
Giuseppe Lauri KO 8 Franco Palmiero
Tracy Patterson Tech. Draw 4 Mike Tidline-El
Wilfredo Vilches KO 5 Wilson Galli
Stephen Smith KO 4 Melikhaya August
Hicklet Lau KO 4 Andre Cray
Luis Dos Fernandez W 8 Pedro Saiz
Ebo Elder Tech. Win 6 Dagoberto Najera
Justo Sencion KO 3 Ronnie Longakit
Henry Bruseles KO 4 Javier Valadez
Anthony Washington W 6 Ronald Greer
Larry Mosley W 6 Pedro Garcia

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Raul Balbi W 12 Julien Lorcy
(Wins WBA Title)
Angel Manfredy W 12 Julio Diaz
Acelino Freitas W 10 Alfred Kotey
Alejandro Gonzalez KO 5 Gerald Gray
Roberto Garcia KO 4 John Trigg
Leonard Dorin W 10 Emanuel Augustus
Jorge Paez Tech. Draw 1 Justo Sanchez
Mario Lechowski W 12 Tony Pep
Koji Arisawa KO 5 Khumphoon Eausampan
Bobby Vanzie KO 1 Anthony Maynard
David Armstrong KO 7 Benito Rodriguez
Miguel Callist KO 8 Miguel Angel Suarez
Bruno Wartelle KO 3 Thandosine Smith
Bradley Pryce W 12 Lucky Samba
Jose Baltazar W 4 Jose Badillo
Alex Arthur KO 1 Dimitri Gorodetsky
Marshall Martinez KO 2 Jacob Godinez
Marshall Martinez KO 4 Carlos Alvarez

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Joel Casamayor KO 8 Joe Morales
(Retains WBA Title)
Steve Forbes W 12 John Brown
(Retains IBF Title)
Lamont Pearson KO 6 Jesse Gutierrez
Carlos Hernandez KO 9 Juan Angel Macias
Daniel Alicea KO 1 Bobby Rishea
Laszlo Bognar KO 2 Mircea Lonel
Tontcho Tontchev KO 3 Adrian Parlogea
Boris Sinitsin W 12 Pedro Miranda
Claudio Martinet W Disq. 4 Pablo Estrella
Jorge Barrios KO 6 Justo Martinez
Affif Djelti KO 6 Alex Moon
Yodsanan 3K-Battery KO 4 Fernando Montilla

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Daniel Seda W 10 Roger DeJesus Medal
Scott Harrison KO 5 Gary Thornhill
Orlando Soto W 12 Edgar Barcenas
Takashi Koshimoto W 12 Donny Suratin
Gavin Rees W 12 Nikolai Eremeev
Mike Anchondo KO 1 Juan Carlos Garcia
Rogers Mtagwa KO 3 Steve Trumble
Esham Pickering W 6 Carl Allen

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Michael Brodie KO 5 Frederick Bonafi
Ratanachai Vorapin W 10 Danny Romero
John Michael Johnson KO 7 Harold Grey
Lester Fuentes W 10 Evangelio Perez
Pastor Maurin KO 2 Sergio Ledesma
Salim Medjkoune KO 4 Sandor Koczak
Osamu Sato KO 11 Wichit Chuwatana
Nedal Hussein KO 2 Phonsap Pha-Or
Ady Lewis W 6 Tommy Waite
Joan Guzman W 12 Edel Ruiz
Gilberto Corrales KO 1 Marcos Badillo

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Eidy Moya KO 11 Adan Vargas
(Wins Vacant WBA Title)
Rafael Marquez W 10 Mark Johnson
Johnny Bredahl W 6 Evangelio Perez
Jess Maca W 12 Ryuichi Minoriyama
Carlos Madrigal KO 2 Oswaldo Guerrero
Nicky Booth KO 7 Jim Betts
Spend Abazi KO 4 Alexander Yagupov
Jose Sanjuanelo KO 2 Ady Lewis
Jorge Espindola W 8 Hugo Soto
Brahim Asloum W 6 Mercurio Ciaramitaro

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Masamori Tokuyama W 12
Gerry Penalosa
(Retains WBC Title)
Saen Sor Ploenchit W 10 Joel Junio
Julio Coronel KO 7 Vernie Torres
Pedro Alcazar W 12 Jorge Otero
Eiji Kojima Tech. Win 9 Raul Juarez
Francisco Mateos W 10 Oscar Arciniega
Hussein Hussein KO 1 Rung Makate
Joel Avila KO 7 Marlon Castaneda

FLYWEIGHTS

Isidro Garcia KO 4 Francisco Mendoza
Melvin Magramo Tech. Win 9
Anthony Villamor
Gabula Vabaza D 12 Zolile Mbityi
Gabriel Elizondo W 6 Glenn Donaire
Liborio Romero KO 3 Ricardo Castro
Brian Viloria KO 4 Kenny Berrios

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Ricardo Lopez KO 8 Zolani Petelo
(Retains IBF Title)
Nelson Dieppa W 12 Fahlan Sakkreerin
Baby Jake Matlala KO 5 Micky Cantwell
Satoshi Kogumazaka W 10
Songkram Porpaoin
Ernesto Castro KO 12 Javier Martinez
Keisuke Yokoyama W 10 Takayuki Korogi

STRAWWEIGHTS

Robert Leyva Tech. Draw 3 Miguel Barrera
(Retains IBF Title)
Isaac Bustos KO 3 Leandro Mendoza
Rodrigo Garcia W Disq. 1 Oscar Murillo

EVERLAST
SINCE 1910

PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

Talk about a no-brainer. At the conclusion of Bernard Hopkins' stunning destruction of Felix Trinidad to unify the middleweight crown at Madison Square Garden, media types were debating whether they had just witnessed the greatest performance in the history of boxing. Obviously, when the praise reaches that level, the Fighter of the Month honor is a foregone conclusion.

Trinidad was generally perceived as the most devastating offensive force in boxing, and some even considered him the best all-around fighter in the world, but Hopkins outsmarted him, outboxed him, and outslugged him over the course of 34 amazingly one-sided minutes of action. Early in the 35th minute, a right hand finished Trinidad and cemented Hopkins' standing as the truly great fighter he had long waited to prove himself to be.

Afterward, Hopkins received the Sugar Ray Robinson Trophy, recognizing "The Executioner" as the winner of the Middleweight World Championship Series. And even if the great Sugar Ray were alive and in his prime today, he would be hard-pressed to put on a boxing display more Fighter of the Month-worthy than what Hopkins did on September 29.

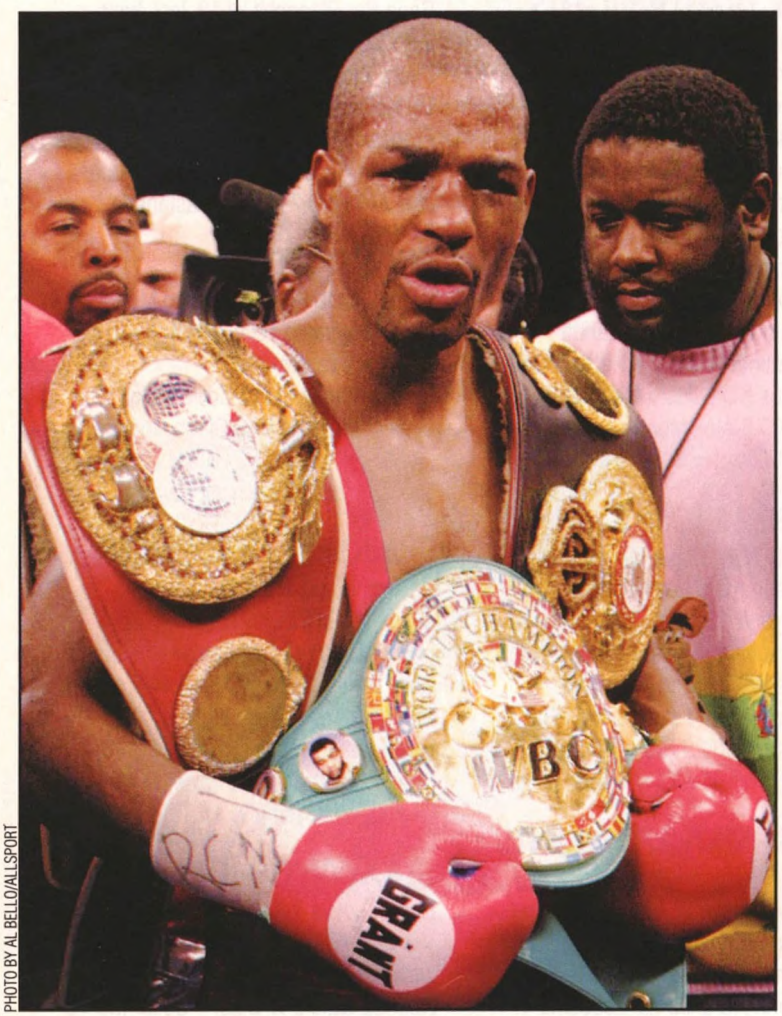


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Bernard Hopkins

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Ricardo Lopez KO 8 Zolani Petelo

New York, New York: Lopez, who hadn't fought since December 2000, reminded everybody of what a special talent he is with a clinical eighth-round knockout of Petelo on the Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad undercard at Madison Square Garden. It was the Mexican maestro's second defense of the IBF junior flyweight title he won in October '99, and reinforced his stature as one of the game's most polished practitioners.

It was a minor miracle that Petelo, the former IBF minimumweight titlist, lasted as long as he did. The South African southpaw fielded a picture-perfect left hook flush on the chin in the second round that deposited him on the floor, but showed grit by beating the count and continued to advance.

Lopez, 107, took his time, casually avoiding Petelo's offensive efforts, while looking for opportunities to unload his own arsenal. His right hand began to land with regularity in the fourth, and when Petelo, 107¾, turned away in the fifth, it looked momentarily like he was quitting. But he fought on, and gamely fired back in the sixth when Lopez cornered him and opened up with both hands.

Petelo, 26, continued to apply pressure in the seventh, but try as he might, he simply couldn't penetrate Lopez' artful defense. The challenger's frustration culminated in the eighth when a pair of rights and a left hook decked him again. Dazed but seemingly capable of rising, Petelo sat and watched as referee Arthur Mercante Sr. (USA), working in his 145th and final title bout, counted him out at the 1:32 mark.

According to CompuBox, the 34-year-old Lopez landed 171 punches (166 of them powerpunches) to Petelo's 99. The win lifted Lopez' record to 50-0-1 (37), while Petelo dropped to 17-3-2 (9).

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View

Promoter: Don King Productions

(9-29-01)

Nigel Collins

Byron Mitchell W 12 Manuel Siaca

New York, New York: A first-round knockdown proved critical as Mitchell hung on to retain the WBA super middleweight belt with an unpopular 12-round split decision over Siaca in a non-televised bout on the Hopkins-Trinidad card at the Garden.

Ironically, Siaca, the man Mitchell had beaten to regain the vacant title with a come-from-behind last-round knockout in March, almost duplicated his conqueror's feat when he floored the fatigued Mitchell with a left hook in the 12th round. But "Gator" beat referee Arthur Mercante Jr.'s count and survived until the final bell, which allowed him to squeak home the winner by a narrow margin.

Mitchell, 168, Ozark, Alabama, looked set for an early night when he floored Siaca, 167½, Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, with a hard right late in the opening round. Siaca, however, did not appear hurt, and was fighting back effectively at the bell.

The fight—an untidy affair that featured almost as much pushing and mauling as clean punching—see-sawed back and forth the rest of the way. The 6'1" Siaca, 25, scored well with right hands and occasionally used his height advantage to box at long range.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Masterful Lopez dissects Petelo

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Mitchell and Siaca trade on the inside

But most of the contest was fought on the inside, where both bumped heads and landed jolting uppercuts that brought a flow of blood from Siaca's nose and raised a lump under Mitchell's left eye.

Although he looked weary, the 28-year-old Mitchell, 24-1-1 (17), outworked Siaca, 15-4 (14), in the ninth and 10th, winning both rounds on all three official scorecards. But a bristling toe-to-toe exchange in the 11th appeared to take more out of the defending champion than it did the challenger, and Siaca hurt Mitchell with a lunging left in the 12th. The blow staggered Mitchell backward, and then a left hook put him down. But unlike Mitchell in their first encounter, Siaca was unable to finish the job, leaving the outcome in the hands of the official arbitrators.

Judge Tom Kaczmarek (USA) voted for Siaca, 115-112, but was overruled by Ove Ovesen (Denmark) and Guy Jutras (Canada), who both scored it for Mitchell, 114-112. THE RING had it 114-113 for Mitchell, but wouldn't have had a problem with Siaca winning. A third fight is likely.

Promoter: Don King Productions
(9-29-01)
Nigel Collins

Sven Ottke W 12 James Butler

Magdeburg, Germany: Excitement is never the key word where Ottke, 168, Germany, is concerned, but the IBF super middleweight champion is hardly ephemeral. This was his division-record 11th title defense, and Butler, 168, Bronx, New York, went the way of almost all the others, outpointed out of sight at the Boerdelandhalle where 8,000 fans cheered on the local hero.

While Germany's national soccer team was being humiliated by England in a crucial World Cup qualifying game some 350 miles away in Munich, Ottke was once more proving imperious. Butler was the mandatory challenger, but did not trouble Ottke for a moment. Ottke, 24-0 (4), never threatened a dramatic stoppage victory—he rarely does—but he was still utterly dominant.

A fireworks display accompanied Ottke's ring entrance, and he built up a commanding lead from the opening bell, his accurate punching keeping the challenger on the back foot and preventing him from offering anything in the way of significant retaliation. Such was the control Ottke exerted that when Butler, 28, returned to his corner at the end of the sixth round, he was met by trainer Maximum Pierret with the words: "You've got to knock this guy out now or you'll lose."

A knockout by the American was never on. He was simply not sharp or quick enough to get his punches in on the 34-year-old German. When the bell rang for round 11, Butler, 18-2 (12), was entering unchartered waters. The only times he had previously been 10 rounds were against Ghana's Rufat Buku in 1998 and against Jerry Lee Williams last March. Ottke, however, was way ahead on points even before referee Randy Neumann (USA) deducted a point from Butler's total in the 11th for trying too hard to rough Ottke up, and there was no surprise with the unanimous decision of the judges. Luca Montella (Italy) and Jean Williams (USA) both scored it 118-109, while Germany's Wanfried Keuchler had it 119-108. THE RING also scored 119-108.

Promoter: Wilfried Sauerland
(9-1-01)
Brian Doogan

Veerapol Sahaprom D 12 Toshiaki Nishioka

Yokohama, Japan: WBC bantam champ Veerapol (who also uses the last name Nakornluang-Promotion), 118, Thailand, barely

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Nishioka fends off a Sahaprom right hand

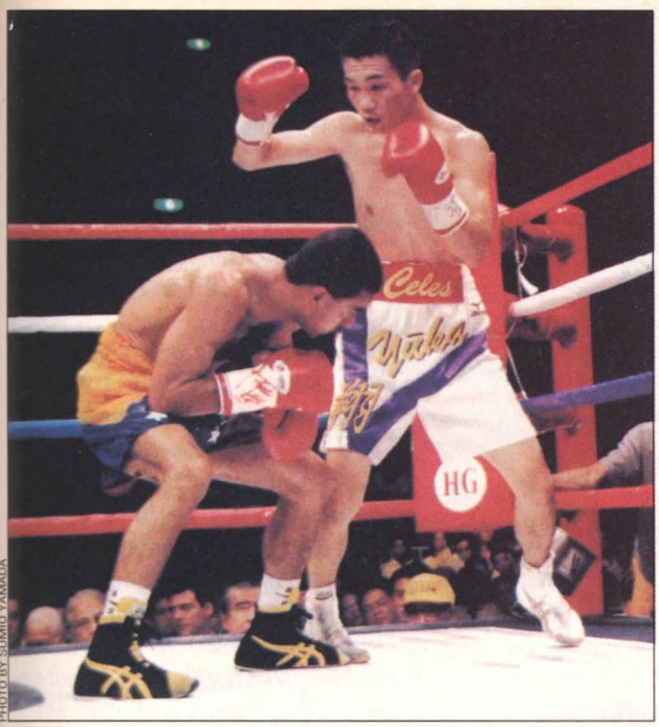


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Rojas crouches his way inside against Kobayashi

kept his throne as he was held to a split draw by Japanese lefty Nishioka, 118, over 12 rounds at Yokohama Arena. It was a rematch to their June 2000 fight, which Veerapol won by close but unanimous decision. This time, Nishioka was much more effective, and judge Tom Kaczmarek (USA) scored for the challenger, 115-113. However, Terry Smith (USA) saw it 116-113 for Veerapol, and Lou Filippo (USA) had the fight even at 114-114, allowing the Thailander to retain the title for the seventh time.

The taller challenger got off to a good start, utilizing his southpaw jab to dominate the first three rounds. But the momentum shifted in the fourth round, as the champ found his range despite a cut over his right eye. Yet Nishioka, 22-3-2 (13), came back and stunned the 32-year-old champ with a smashing left in the seventh, turning Veerapol's small cut into a nasty gash.

Veerapol, 31-1-1 (23), went to work on the lefty footworker's midsection, which paid off in later rounds. But Nishioka, 25, soldiered on and desperately attacked in the final session, though it wasn't enough to win the verdict in this close, exciting affair.

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions
(9-1-01)
Joe Koizumi

Celes Kobayashi W 12 Jesus Rojas

Yokohama, Japan: On the same card on which Veerapol narrowly retained his hardware against Nishioka, WBA super fly champ Kobayashi, 24-4-3 (14), 115, Japan, also barely kept his belt on a controversial split decision over Venezuelan veteran "Kiki" Rojas, 35-9-3 (19) with 1 no-contest, 114½. Judges Ove Ovesen (Denmark) and Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand) had it 116-114 and 115-113, respectively, for Kobayashi, while Madaldo Villalobos (Panama) scored the bout 116-113 for Rojas, a two-division former champion who held this title briefly from '98-'99.

The crouching southpaw Kobayashi, 28, was aggressive and moved forward throughout the fight, but Rojas, 37, cleverly countered him while retreating. There were many difficult rounds to score, as Kobayashi forced the challenger to the ropes with solid bodyshots, while Rojas, with his back to the ropes, countered the champ with the more accurate combos. In the end, though, the home fighter got the decision in his first defense of the belt he won from Leo Gamez in March.

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions
(9-1-01)
Joe Koizumi

Vassiliy Jirov KO 8 Julian Letterlough

Reno, Nevada: IBF cruiserweight champion Jirov gave knockout artist Letterlough a solid boxing lesson on the way to systematically breaking him down and stopping him at 1:24 of the eighth round at Lawlor Events Center on the Marco Antonio Barrera-Enrique Sanchez undercard. It was Jirov's fifth defense of the title he won from "King" Arthur Williams in June 1999, and he kept intact his claim of having scored a knockout in each of his title fights.

From the moment he entered the ring, the 27-year-old Jirov, fighting out of Scottsdale, Arizona, via Kazakhstan, never took his icy blue eyes off Letterlough, Reading, Pennsylvania. Both men rushed to the center of the ring to start the first, but referee Jay Nady (USA) had to separate them almost instantly, warning both boxers not to tie up. Southpaw Jirov, 190, began to move in and out, landing his hard right jab, and halfway through the round he scored a heavy left to the body. Jirov finished the round strong, first landing a solid right hook and then pasting "Mr. KO" with a volley of 14 unanswered punches along the ropes, including a sizzling left uppercut.

The 6'2" champion set the pattern in the second, keeping the 5'9½" Letterlough at bay with a stiff right jab, then following with leg-sapping straight lefts to the midsection. Letterlough, 31, looked unable to deal with Jirov's southpaw style, failing to keep his left foot outside of the champ's right foot, and rarely answering with a jab of his own.

Letterlough, 186½ and a natural light heavyweight, had his best moment of the fight in round three when, after absorbing three vicious lefts to his body, he caught Jirov with a strong left hook that momentarily wobbled the champion. Letterlough couldn't cash in, though, and his six-punch followup salvo was interrupted by a solid Jirov right hook.

It was in the fifth round that Jirov's bodyshots began to break down the challenger, and his head-snapping jabs deterred Letterlough from rushing in with his bombs. Halfway through the seventh round, a ripping left to the body appeared to take the starch out of the challenger, and Jirov once again closed the round by punishing him along the ropes.

Sensing the end, Jirov bullied Letterlough back to the ropes for another hard flurry in the eighth. Letterlough, 17-2-1 (16), escaped, only to be wobbled by a thudding right hook. He was pounded into the ropes near his corner, where a combination of hard shots to the head and body, punctuated by two brutal left uppercuts, prompted Nady to halt the bout.

"The main thing was boxing," said Jirov, 30-0 (27). "I didn't

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Ref Nady halts the Jirov-Letterlough bout

want to trade punches. After I outsmarted him, I finished him off little by little."

"We had a perfect plan," said Ivaylo Gotsez, Jirov's manager. "It was perfectly executed. Everyone thought Vassiliy was a banger, a face-first fighter. This was for our critics. He's the best bodypuncher in the business."

In addition to Jirov expressing a desire to unify the cruiserweight division, Gotsev has one particular opponent in mind: "We want James Toney if he can make the weight," he said. "If he wants to feel the pain, we have one promise: It will be lights out for James Toney."

Television: HBO

Promoters: Forum Boxing, Panix Promotions

(9-8-01)

Mike Houser

Masamori Tokuyama W 12 Gerry Penalosa

Yokohama, Japan: Japan-based North Korean Tokuyama, 115, successfully kept his WBC 115-pound title as he remained more aggressive than the top-ranked Filipino Penalosa, 115, and withstood the challenger's furious retaliation in the ninth round en route to a unanimous decision over 12 heats at Yokohama Arena. Some 12,000 spectators were in attendance to see Tokuyama make his third title defense.

Tokuyama, 27, threw a lot of punches in the first two rounds, although he missed plenty against the cautious and stiff Filipino southpaw. Penalosa, a former champion, dominated the third and fourth by getting his own offense going and proving much more accurate than Tokuyama.

Over the middle rounds, Penalosa, 30, sustained bad gashes on the head and face, and struggled to see and fight effectively as the blood poured down. In the ninth, however, Penalosa had by far his best round, hurting the champ with persistent body bombardments. The title seemed in danger of changing hands at that point, but Tokuyama fought hard in the 10th and outpunched the shorter Filipino. Penalosa, 43-4-2 (28), took the 11th, but the champ was in command in the final round to to wrap up the decision. Chuck Hassett (USA) and Chuck Williams (USA) both scored it 115-113, and John Keane (England) saw the fight 116-113, all for Tokuyama, 25-2-1 (6).

This victory raised Tokuyama's stock, since Penalosa was regarded as a very formidable mandatory challenger. The challenger didn't look as sharp as usual, but that was probably due to Tokuyama's tricky style.

Promoter: Hideo Kanazawa's Kanazawa Promotions

(9-24-01)

Joe Koizumi

Steve Forbes W 12 John Brown

Miami, Florida: In a rematch, Forbes retained the IBF junior lightweight title he won nine months earlier against Brown at this same venue, The Dome at Miccosukee Indian Gaming. The win positioned Forbes for a possible unification fight against the winner of the upcoming Joel Casamayor-Acelino Freitas bout. The loss was "The Eastern Beast's" fourth in four world title fights.

For Forbes, who had eight bouts in 2000, it was his first fight since his title-winning performance last December. In the eighth round of that fight, Forbes landed a right hand that opened a severe laceration on Brown's left ear, sending blood cascading down the side of Brown's face and resulting in a TKO. While some considered that result fluky, Forbes' victory in the rematch was more conclusive.

A firm believer that the best defense is a good offense, the 5'3" Brown, 130, Atlantic City, New Jersey, repeatedly tried to negate Forbes' reach advantage and take away his legs by first backing him up with looping right hands to the head, then rushing inside to land left hooks to the champion's midsection. Forbes, who willingly brawled with Brown in their first meeting, changed tactics the second time around. He attributed that to the return to his camp of trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr., who worked with Forbes briefly in 2000 but was not in the corner for the first bout against Brown.

"This fight I came in and boxed," Forbes said. "They [Mayweather and co-trainer Denny Smith] had me turning and boxing, and every once in a while when I was sitting inside, I'd get in my punches and get out or tie up."

Forbes, 130, Las Vegas, Nevada, utilized effective jabs and left hooks to the head to keep the free-swinging Brown at bay and win the first two rounds. Whenever Brown did manage to get inside, Forbes tied him up so he was unable to pound the champion's midsection. But Brown kept trying, and he won most of the middle rounds with a two-fisted body attack. The fighters clashed heads in round eight, opening a cut about an inch long above Forbes' left eye.

Rounds nine and 10 were close, but the 33-year-old Brown was clearly losing steam. Brown did some good work in the first minute of round 11, but the 24-year-old champion took control with left hands to the head and closed out the stanza with a flurry of punches. Brown, apparently sensing that he needed to win the final round to have a shot at wresting the crown from Forbes, rushed at the champion, but Forbes stayed out of danger with a couple of right uppercuts. With less than a minute remaining in the fight, Forbes backed Brown against the ropes and hurt him with a straight right hand to the temple. Brown was in trouble, but he stayed on his feet to hear the final bell.

Judges Peter Trematerra (USA) and Michael Pernick (USA) were on the mark with scores of 115-113 for Forbes, while Mark Streisand (USA) did not give Brown, 23-9 (11), enough credit for his bodypunching and scored the bout 117-111. Forbes, 20-1 (5), was effusive in his praise for his trainers.

"Mayweather and Denny Smith put me through a tough camp. I wanted to kill them in camp, but now I appreciate it. I felt I had a love-hate relationship with the training 'cause I hated training like that, but I love the results. And I love that they cared enough to push me. They wouldn't let me give nothing but 100 percent."

The referee was Frank Santore (USA).

Television: Showtime

Promoter: America Presents

(9-29-01)

Ken Knox

Joel Casamayor KO 8 Joe Morales

Miami, Florida: Casamayor, the WBA super featherweight champion, turned in another dominating performance to set up a unification showdown with WBO counterpart Acelino Freitas. A little over an hour after Alfred Kotey ended Freitas' consecutive knockout streak at 29, Casamayor defended his title for the fifth time as he methodically dismantled Morales over eight rounds at The Dome at Miccosukee Indian Gaming.

The Dome was full of Casamayor's Cuban countrymen, eager to finally see their unbeaten compatriot defend in his adopted hometown the title he won in May 2000. Casamayor, 130, was to have made the first defense of his championship belt in Miami in July 2000 on the undercard of the Felix Trinidad-Mamadou Thiam fight. But opponent Bernard Harris didn't even try to make the weight, so the bout became a 10-round, non-title affair in which Harris looked more like a scared rabbit than a professional fighter. Morales, however, was the perfect foil for the champion, ensuring that Casamayor's fans went home happy.

Morales, 129½, San Antonio, Texas, earned his first world title opportunity by stopping Carlos Contreras in 11 rounds in June. The brave Texan is a decent boxer and a hard worker, but as appealing to Casamayor's handlers was the fact that Morales had a mediocre 17-5 record coming into the fight, had won only four fights by knockout, had been past eight rounds only once, and had not fought at this high a weight in almost two years.

It was obvious from the opening bell that Casamayor was in no hurry to exit the ring. In fact, Morales, 27, won the first round on two of the official scorecards as he pressed the action while southpaw Casamayor spent most of the stanza sizing up his opponent. But in the final 30 seconds of that round, the champion landed three straight left hands to Morales' head, a precursor of what the challenger would endure over the next seven rounds.

Morales continued to try to penetrate the champion's defenses in the second round, but Casamayor's superior reflexes allowed him to slip or block almost every punch Morales threw and then fire back effectively. Only Morales' heart and conditioning kept him in front of Casamayor, but the champion was coolly efficient, slowly but surely breaking down Morales' defenses and his will.

Morales had some moments early in the sixth round, opening the stanza with a pair of right-left combinations. But Casamayor responded with crisp left hands that snapped back Morales' head. Casamayor punished Morales in round seven, landing stiff combinations to the head and body, punctuated by a right hook that opened a cut on Morales' left eyebrow near the bridge of the nose.

Morales tried to move more in the eighth round, but Casamayor, 30, kept him in range and continued landing clean combinations that widened the cut over the Texan's eye, sending blood flowing down his face. With just under a minute remaining in the round, referee Armando Garcia (USA) halted the action and summoned ringside physician Dr. Mark Gordon to inspect the injury. Seconds later, Garcia stopped the bout at the 2:04 mark.

"Once I started to relax in the ring, I was able to start hitting him at will," the champion said. "I cut him with the right hook. After I did that, I knew it was over; I just kept going for him."

After the fight, it was announced that the much-hyped match between Casamayor and Freitas would take place in January 2002 at a yet-to-be-determined site. Of the powerpunching Brazilian, Casamayor, 26-0 (16), said, "I can't wait to get Freitas. It's a great fight."

Television: Showtime

Promoter: America Presents

(9-29-01)

Ken Knox ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Casamayor zaps Morales with a jab

New Face

(Continued from page 20)

Gloves champion about 20 years ago."

And spectators at Dublin's Vicar Street nightspot, where Rock battled to overcome tough English journeyman Jason Collins last April, were amazed to see McConaughey helping out in the Irishman's corner. The actor was in town making a movie and readily accepted the invitation to join the fight team.

"It was quite an honor to have Matt, a famous Hollywood star, handing me up my towel and sloshing out my mouthpiece," said Rock.

But fooling around with the famous doesn't let the fighting Irishman lose sight of his real goal—to see just how far his fists can take him. His manager, Irish bar owner and businessman Brian Peters, said Rock is ready to step up for a big test.

"He might not prove to be a world-beater, but he'll give anyone in the world a hard time," said Peters. "He's strong, clever, and takes a hell of a good shot."

Rock made a big impression in his American debut in December 2000, when he outslugged Boston's Tommy Attardo in a bloody brawl that Worcester, Massachusetts, fans hailed as the best fight they had seen in years.

"People who had seen me being interviewed on TV or had read about me in the papers were stopping me on the streets to congratulate me," said Rock.

He returned to Worcester three months later to face Holly Elliott, winning every round before putting the local man down for the count with a left-right combo in the sixth and last.

While in the United States, Rock spent a three-week training stint under the watchful eye of Freddie Roach at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Los Angeles. But he remains faithful to his Belfast trainer John Breen, who has coached him since he turned professional six years ago.

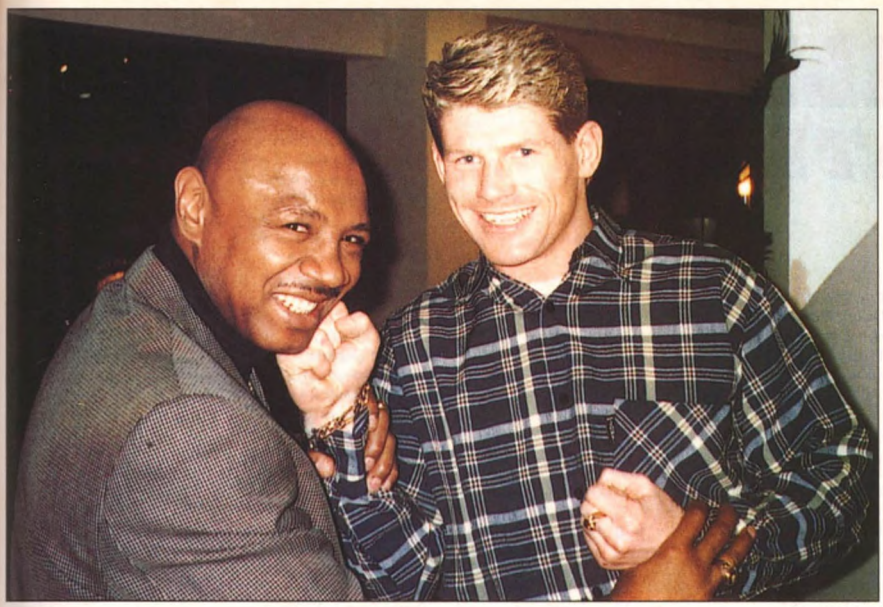
Following the American successes, Peters issued challenges to Oscar De La Hoya, Fernando Vargas, David Reid, and Tony Ayala Jr. He even sent them tapes of Rock in action, but there were no takers. Pernell Whitaker was lined up as a likely opponent until "Sweet Pea" made a mess of his comeback and fell back into his old bad habits.

It's most likely that Rock will go for the European title, currently held by Frenchman Mamadou Thiam, and hopefully use that as the springboard to a world title shot. If his big chance never comes, the Irishman won't be too put out. He doesn't need to fight for a living. A successful automobile dealer in Dublin, he has wisely invested his earnings in property in Ireland and in the States.

"I don't have any great pressures. It's guys who don't do anything else but fight who have the pressures," he said.

Rock's entrepreneurial spirit blossomed early. One of 13 children, he left home at 16 and operated as an illegal street trader in city center Dublin, selling everything from socks to strips of sticking plaster.

"I hung around with a gang, got into trouble, and spent a couple of spells behind bars," Rock said. "In prison, I heard guys bragging about how good they were as



Rock clowns around with Hall of Famer Marvin Hagler. Although it's too late for him to test his mettle against Marvelous Marvin in the ring, the Irishman is eager to tangle with the best in the world.

criminals, but if they were so good, then why were they locked up? I decided there must be something better I could do with my life."

Boxing proved his ideal focus, though his introduction to the sport at the tender age of six might have put off someone less steely.

"In my first week as a boxer, I fought twice and I can remember distinctly the beatings I took," he said. "I was one of eight fighting brothers, and six of us once fought on the same bill, which must be some sort of a record."

Though he won several Irish amateur titles at minor levels, Rock was twice foiled in bids for national senior honors. Turning pro in 1995 with veteran Belfast manager Mike Callahan, Rock switched to Londoner Frank Warren for a spell before linking up with Peters, a young entrepreneur with ambitions to be a major promoter.

After seven straight wins, Rock went in too deep against hard-hitting British junior middleweight champion Ensley Bingham in April 1998. Still, he had established a slight lead before Bingham turned up the heat with a blistering barrage in the seventh round. Though the game Irishman refused to go down, he was reeling and bleeding from the nose when referee Tony Green stopped the fight just 22 seconds into the round. Rock maintains he wasn't badly hurt and that Green acted hastily. He has never been floored as a professional and only once hit the deck as an amateur, an experience he vows won't happen again.

But the durable Dubliner very nearly went down for the count, permanently, when he tangled with a member of one of Ireland's top criminal gangs. Rock, working as a doorman at a city nightclub, threw out a troublemaker, the son of a major drug dealer. Later, as he was leaving the premises to go home, a gun was pushed through the window of his automobile and he was ordered out.

"When I stood up, the gun was forced into my stomach," recalled Rock. "I shoved it down just as the guy pulled the trigger. It blew holes in the tops of both my legs, and I have the scars to prove it. I managed to stagger back inside the club, and another shot was fired through the door, but I wasn't hit. After two weeks in hospital, I discharged myself to get some decent grub and go back to work."

Life is much calmer these days, thankfully, and Rock has plenty of interests to keep him occupied in between ring dates. He has appeared in TV commercials, flown a helicopter, driven in motor rallies, and jet-skied 60 miles across the Irish Sea, between Ireland and Britain, to raise around $15,000 for the charity organization Childline. But his main focus is still on boxing—and seeing just how far he can go.

"It's time to see if I'm good enough to mix in the major league, or if I'd be better off doing something else," Rock said. ■

Patrick Myler is a freelance writer living in Dublin, Ireland, and an occasional contributor to this magazine.

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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of August 2001, the WBC as of September 2001, and the IBF as of September 2001.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Hasim Rahman (USA)	C	–	C
John Ruiz (USA)	–	C	–
Mike Tyson (USA)	1	6	6
Lennox Lewis (GB)	2	4	4
Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)	3	3	–
Fres Oquendo (USA)	4	–	5
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	5	–	3
Lance Whitaker (USA)	6	5	7
Larry Donald (USA)	7	9	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	8	7	8
Vaughn Bean (USA)	9	12	–
Michael Moorer (USA)	10	–	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	1	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	2	–
Nicolay Valouev (RUS)	26	8	–
David Izon (NIG)	12	10	–
Chris Byrd (USA)	11	11	1
Vacant	–	–	2
David Tua (NZ)	14	–	9
Monte Barrett (USA)	18	–	10

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	C	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	–	–	C
Louis Azille (DR)	1	4	7
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	2	–	–
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	3	11	11
O'Neil Bell (USA)	4	12	3
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	5	2	6
Dale Brown (CAN)	6	–	–
Jean Mark Mormeck (FRA)	7	1	–
Carlos Cruzat (CHI)	8	–	–
Carl Thompson (GB)	9	7	10
Rudiger May (GER)	10	–	–
James Toney (USA)	–	3	4
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	17	5	12
Arthur Williams (USA)	11	6	9
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	–	8	–
Andre Purlett (GUY)	–	9	–
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	21	10	5
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Jorge Castro (ARG)	–	–	8

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	C
Clinton Woods (GB)	1	4	6
Yawe Davis (ITA)	2	–	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	3	5	2
Antonio Tarver (USA)	4	7	4
Mads Larsen (DEN)	5	8	–
Eric Harding (USA)	6	–	3
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	7	3	1
Julio Gonzalez (USA)	8	10	–
Montell Griffin (USA)	9	12	–
Michael Nunn (USA)	10	–	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	1	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	2	5
Robert Koon (USA)	17	6	–
David Telesco (USA)	–	9	7
Will Taylor (USA)	–	–	8
Glencoffe Johnson (USA)	–	11	9
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Eric Lucas (CAN)	C	–	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	1	–	–
Markus Beyer (GER)	2	12	5
Omar Sheika (USA)	3	5	4
David Reid (USA)	4	–	7
David Starie (GB)	5	6	6
Glenn Catley (GB)	6	–	–
Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)	7	–	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	8	7	3
Danilo Haussler (GER)	9	10	–
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	10	2	12
Vacant	–	1	1
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	16	3	–
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	4	–
Rudy Markussen (DEN)	12	8	–
Mikkel Kessler (DEN)	15	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
James Butler (USA)	–	–	8
Antwun Echols (USA)	11	–	9
Charles Brewer (USA)	28	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	C	–	C
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	C	–
Erland Betare (FRA)	1	–	6
Howard Eastman (GB)	2	1	4
Tito Mendoza (PAN)	3	10	3
Cristian Sanavia (ITA)	4	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	5	3	7
Keith Holmes (USA)	6	6	5
Carl Daniels (USA)	7	11	1
Morrade Hakkar (FRA)	8	–	–
Jerry Elliott (NIG)	9	–	–
Naotaka Hozumi (JAP)	10	–	–
David Reid (USA)	–	2	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	4	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	5	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	–	7	–
Antonio Perugino (ITA)	15	8	–
Ryan Rhodes (GB)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Brian Barbosa (USA)	22	–	8
Raymond Joval (HOL)	16	–	9
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	C	–	–
Vacant	–	C	C
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	1	6	–
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	2	–	7
Travis Simms (USA)	3	11	10
J.C. Candelo (COL)	4	8	5
Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)	5	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	6	–	9
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	7	4	–
Bronco McKart (USA)	8	–	3
Yory Boy Campas (MEX)	9	–	–
Alex Bunema (USA)	10	–	6
Jose Flores (MEX)	–	1	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	2	–
Winky Wright (USA)	–	3	1
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	5	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	19	7	–
Santiago Samaniego (PAN)	24	9	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	–	10	–
Robert Frazier (USA)	–	–	2
Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)	20	–	4
Jason Papillion (USA)	26	–	8

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Shane Mosley (USA)	C	–	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	–	C	–
Vernon Forrest (USA)	–	–	C
Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)	1	–	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	2	7	–
Danny Perez (USA)	3	8	7
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	4	2	6
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	5	5	4
Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)	6	–	8
Alessandro Duran (ITA)	7	–	–
Julian Holland (AUSTRL)	8	11	9
Manuel Gomez (MEX)	9	–	–
Cory Spinks (USA)	10	–	2
Ricardo Mayorga (CR)	–	1	–
Michael Trabant (GERE)	–	3	–
Chantel Stanciel (USA)	20	4	–
James Page (USA)	–	6	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	9	–
Frederic Klose (FRA)	22	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Rafael Pineda (COL)	13	–	3
Antonio Diaz (MEX)	17	–	5
Oba Carr (USA)	21	–	10

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	C	C	–

Zab **Judah (USA)**	–	–	C
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	1	11	–
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	2	8	8
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	3	1	–
Eamonn Magee (GB)	4	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	5	–	–
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	6	–	–
Ben Tackie (GHA)	7	–	4
Ray Oliveira (USA)	8	–	9
Terronn Millett (USA)	9	10	3
James Leija (USA)	10	–	6
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	–	2	–
Randall Bailey (USA)	–	3	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	11	4	10
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	5	–
Ricky Hatton (GB)	13	6	–
Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)	26	7	–
Demetrio Ceballos (PAN)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Teddy Reid (JAM)	21	–	5
Carlos Vilches (ARG)	–	–	7

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)	C	–	–
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	–	C	–
Paul Spadafora (USA)	–	–	C
Steve Johnston (USA)	1	–	8
Juan Lazcano (USA)	2	10	6
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	3	–	–
Alex Trujillo (PR)	4	8	–
Julio Diaz (USA)	5	6	5
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	6	5	–
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	7	–	–
Carlos Gerena (PR)	8	–	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	9	11	12
Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)	10	–	4
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	1	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	–	2	–
Miguel Callist (PAN)	–	3	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	14	4	–
Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)	18	7	11
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	30	9	9
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	–	3
Acelino Freitas (BRA)	–	–	7
Efren Hinojosa (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	–	C	–
Steve Forbes (USA)	–	–	C
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	7	4
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	4	–	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	5	1	–
Randy Suico (PHIL)	6	–	–
Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)	7	–	–
Philip Ndou (SA)	8	–	8
Affif Djelti (FRA)	9	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	10	–	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	22	2	–
Lamont Pearson (USA)	18	3	1
Luis Navarro (USA)	14	4	–
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	–	5	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	6	–
Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)	28	8	–
Kinji Amano (JAP)	29	9	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	16	10	–
John Brown (USA)	–	–	2
David Santos (USA)	26	–	3
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	–	5
Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)	15	–	6
Luis Lizarraga (USA)	–	–	7
Daniel Attah (NIG)	–	–	9
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Derrick Gainer (USA)	–	C	–
Frankie Toledo (USA)	–	–	C
Naseem Hamed (GB)	1	2	7
Injin Chi (KOR)	2	12	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	3	3	11
Johnny Tapia (USA)	4	7	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	5	–	–
Istvan Kovacs (HUN)	6	10	12
Manuel Calvo (SPA)	7	–	–
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	8	–	–
Scott Harrison (GB)	9	–	–
Augie Sanchez (USA)	10	–	4
Daniel Seda (PR)	20	1	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	4	2
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	5	–
Lewis Woods (US)	–	6	–
Armando Cordoba (PAN)	25	8	–
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	9	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	17	–	1
Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)	–	–	3
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	5
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	6
David Toledo (USA)	–	–	8
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	9
Fernando Velardez (MEX)	14	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Willie Jorrin (USA)	C	–	–
Vacant	–	C	1
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	–	–	C
Michael Brodie (GB)	1	–	12
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	2	–	–
Oscar Larios (MEX)	3	–	–
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	4	–	–
Osamu Sato (JAP)	5	8	–
Bones Adams (USA)	6	–	–
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	7	5	4
Marcos Licona (USA)	8	–	–
Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)	9	–	–
Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)	10	–	–
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	1	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	–	2	–
Sithyodthong Yoddamrong (THAI)	–	3	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	–	4	8
Danny Romero (USA)	–	6	–
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	15	7	–
Israel Vasquez (MEX)	–	9	–
Johnny Armour (GB)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)	–	–	3
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	12	–	5
Fahsung 3K-Battery (THAI)	–	–	6
Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)	–	–	7
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	21	–	9
David Donis (USA)	–	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	C	–	–
Vacant	–	C	1
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	1	–	–
Genaro Garcia (USA)	2	10	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	3	2	4
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	4	4	9
Diego Morales (MEX)	5	–	–
Jess Maca (PHIL)	6	–	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	7	8	5
Mark Johnson (USA)	8	6	7
Noel Wilders (GB)	9	–	–
Akihiro Kanai (JAP)	10	–	–
Eidy Moya (VEN)	–	1	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	3	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	5	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	7	–
Diego Morales (MEX)	–	9	10
Vacant	–	–	2
Pete Frissina (USA)	–	12	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	6
Juan Cordoba (ARG)	–	–	8

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	C	–	–
Setsuo Kobayashi (JAP)	–	C	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	–	C
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	9
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	2	12	–
Martin Castillo (MEX)	3	–	3
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	4	–	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	5	–	–
Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)	6	–	–
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	7	–	–
Vernie Torres (USA)	8	–	5
Luis Bolanos (COL)	9	11	8
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	10	2	6
Alexander Munoz (VEN)	–	1	–
Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)	–	3	–
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	4	4
Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)	–	5	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	12	6	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	–	7	–
Adonis Rivas (NIC)	–	8	7
Katsushigo Kawashima (JAP)	16	9	–
Samson 3K-Battery (THAI)	–	10	12
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	22	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	C	–	–
Eric Morel (USA)	–	C	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	C
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	1	–	5
Mike Trejo (USA)	2	4	3
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	3	6	8
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	4	12	–
Randy Mangubat (PHIL)	5	–	–
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	6	–	–
Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)	7	–	–
Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)	8	8	–
Damaen Kelly (GB)	9	10	10
Hawk Makepula (SA)	10	–	4
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	1	–
Mzukisi Sikali (SA)	20	2	–
Isidro Garcia (MEX)	–	3	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	12	5	7
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	7	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Hussein Hussein (LEB)	–	–	6
David Guerault (FRA)	14	–	9

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	C	–	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	C	–
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	–	–	C
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	5	–
Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)	2	–	12
Jesus Martinez (MEX)	3	–	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	4	2	9
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	5	6	4
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	6	11	7
Agustin Luna (MEX)	7	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	8	8	–
Pilkoo Kang (KOR)	9	–	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	10	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	1	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	–	3	–
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	–	4	8
Deeden Kengkarun (THAI)	–	7	–
Wolf Tokimitsu (JAP)	–	9	–
Masibulele Makepula (SA)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Zolani Petelo (SA)	11	–	2
Noel Tunacao (PHIL)	–	–	3
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	21	–	5
Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)	–	–	6
Anis Roga (INDO)	–	–	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	C	–	–
Yutaka Niida (JAP)	–	C	–
Roberto Leyva (MEX)	–	–	C
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	1	–	–
Khulile Makeba (SA)	2	12	–
Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)	3	–	9
Isaac Bustos (MEX)	4	–	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	5	–	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	6	5	8
Noel Tunacao (PHIL)	7	–	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	8	7	6
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	9	–	–
Noel Arambulet (VEN)	10	1	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	2	–
Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)	–	3	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	11	4	–
Kim Ki Hwan (KOR)	–	6	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	8	7
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	9	–
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	10	5
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	–	–	3
Miguel Barrera (MEX)	–	–	4
Mohamed Rachman (INDO)	29	–	10

CLASSIC

From THE RING, November 1941

LOUIS IN ARMY, WILL AID MORALE

The induction of heavyweight champion Joe Louis into the armed services was a boom to Army morale. The draft board shifted Louis from Class 3A, a deferred class, to 1A.

By Daniel M. Daniel

The report from Chicago's Draft Board that it had shifted the classification of Joe Louis from Class 3A, a deferred class, to that of 1A, which subjects him to immediate call for Army service, met with joyous response in Army circles. His induction into the service will be a big boom for Army morale. Too many of the lads who are serving Uncle Sam in various branches have been wondering why men, well-situated financially, have been given their freedom from service, while others, far less fortunate than the champion, have been called to duty.

The Army needs a man like the world heavyweight champion. As an international figure in sports, he should be of tremendous help to bolster the spirit of the conscripted boys. Especially will Joe Louis be of great encouragement to members of his own race, who idolize him. "The Brown Bomber" will never regret his Army service. He will obtain a touch of life he never could get in civilian existence with an Army of attendants always at his beck and call, and more often, watching his every move, regardless of his desires.

THE RING staff is happy to know that the champ won't permit those in charge of his fistic affairs to interfere and plead for the original classification. Like Jack Dempsey, who has always regretted the move that prevented him from serving in 1918, Joe Louis has ever been ready to join the Army. He wanted to enlist, but his great drawing power and the benefits derived from his services by others acted as an obstacle. Now he feels like a free man. He is going to do what a million other young men are doing. And he is tickled pink at the change he is about to encounter.

When THE RING carried a lead article, "Joe Louis In The Army? No, He's In Class 3A," the article was bitterly attacked by many of the followers of the champion. We were accused of trying to force Joe into the Army because of his race. But for every let-

The Army was able to use a figure like Louis, meeting here with former heavyweight champ Gene Tunney, to encourage morale among the men who were ready to enter combat, especially those members of his own race, who idolized him.

ter received attacking THE RING, three times as many were sent in praising us for our stand. We simply wrote the news for our readers as we saw it.

It wasn't a question of race, color, or creed. It wasn't a matter of prejudice or personal feeling. Joe Louis, from the time he started to show skill as an amateur, has had no better friend than THE RING. In fact, long before Mike Jacobs went out west to see Louis in action, before signing him to a contract to appear exclusively for him, THE RING praised Joe to the skies, called him the next world heavyweight champion, and predicted he would be a sensation. It was THE RING who first called Uncle Mike's attention to Louis, after editor Nat Fleischer had seen Joe in action in two amateur tournaments and in two professional fights.

It was a principle for which THE RING was fighting. What is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander—that was the attitude assumed by us.

Louis is needed in the Army. He will be of far greater benefit as a morale builder than he can be of benefit to Uncle Sam's treasury as a moneymaker. The Draft officials at Washington realized that when they requested copies of THE RING containing our article, and so did those in charge at Chicago. THE RING articles on Louis were read with interest by them, and action followed. Again we say to those misguided persons who questioned our sincerity when we called attention to the unfairness of the 3A classification of Louis, we have been judged wrongly by them. There is no publication in America that stands more for the brotherhood of man than does THE RING.

THE RING's recent articles on Louis created a lot of comment and discussion. The editor received hundreds of letters commending this magazine for its fair stand, its open discussion, its willingness to give both sides of the situation, and its sportsmanlike attitude toward the champion.

Some folks, on the other hand, asked: "What had THE RING against Joe Louis? A draft board had investigated him, it had decided that he was entitled to 3A rating. Why don't you fellows let him alone?"

To these people, THE RING answered that it had nothing at all against Joe Louis, his managers, Mike Jacobs, et al, their heirs, and assigns, to have and to hold, so help us.

What would the critics of our policy have THE RING do?

Joe Louis is the heavyweight champion of the world. We are building a tremendous national defense force. More than a million young men have been drafted. Few, extremely few, are in a financial position even approximating that of Joe Louis. A draft board rated Louis 3A, and THE RING did not say that he was not entitled to this deferment.

But THE RING deals with boxing news. Anything which has to do with the biggest man in the ranks of world pugilism is something that calls for attention in this magazine. Would our critics ask us to ignore Louis?

There is another angle. Why should THE RING pussyfoot about Louis? Irrespective of the manifest justice of the 3A rating, his relationship to the draft was something that interested every person who cared about boxing.

It is the impression of THE RING that Louis had been dealt with very fairly by the press of the United States, and by this magazine in particular. THE RING is not oblivious of the tremendous things Joe has

Louis and his promoter, Mike Jacobs, meet with tax collector Joseph T. Higgins. Louis' tax problems would mount as he served his time in the Army, but the popular heavyweight champion put the problems of his country before his own.

THE RING RATINGS, November 1941

Lew Jenkins

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Joe Louis
1. Lou Nova
2. Billy Conn
3. Buddy Baer
4. Lem Franklin
5. Bob Pastor
6. Abe Simon
7. Melio Bettina
8. Turkey Thompson
9. Alberto Lovell
10. Arturo Godoy

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Gus Lesnevich
1. Booker Beckwith
2. Mose Brown
3. Jimmy Bivins
4. Tami Mauriello
5. Jimmy Webb
6. Anton Christoforidis
7. Erv Sarlen
8. Oscar Rankins
9. Teddy Yarosz
10. Joe Maxim

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. Tony Zale
2. Georgie Abrams
3. Billy Soose
4. Ken Overlin
5. Steve Belloise
6. Coley Welch
7. Shorty Hogue
8. Antonio Fernandez
9. Milt Aaron
10. Johnny Colan

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Freddie Cochrane
1. Fritzie Zivic
2. Bob Montgomery
3. Mike Kaplan
4. Izzy Jannazzo
5. Charley Burley
6. Holman Williams
7. Cocoa Kid
8. Harry Weekly
9. Young Kid McCoy
10. Wicky Harkins

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lew Jenkins
1. Ray Robinson
2. Sammy Angott
3. Jackie Wilson
4. Davey Day
5. Dave Castilloux
6. George Latka
7. Ray Lunny
8. Harry Hurst
9. Nick Castiglione
10. Maxie Shapiro

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Chalky Wright
1. Ritchie Lemos
2. Lou Transparenti
3. Bobby Ivy
4. Joey Archibald
5. Sal Bartola
6. Harry Jeffra
7. Mike Raffa
8. Jackie Wilson
9. Jackie Callura
10. Georgie Pace

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lou Salica
1. Tony Olivera
2. Rush Dalma
3. Kenny Lindsay
4. Kui Kong Young
5. Tommy Forte
6. Manuel Ortiz
7. Jim Brady
8. Freddy Pope
9. Horace Mann
10. Benny Goldberg

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. Jackie Paterson
2. Little Dado
3. Little Pancho
4. Johnny Shaughnessy
5. Warren Kendall
6. Jimmy Stubbs
7. Luis Castillo
8. Jimmy Stewart
9. Small Montana
10. Lorenzo Safora

done for boxing. He has been and is an influence for good.

Of course, he did a lot of good things for Joe Louis, too. But if Joe had not come along when he did, to lift the game out of a slough into which it was settling deeper and deeper, boxing in this country would have been hard pressed to get along.

It wasn't merely that Louis re-created interest. In fact, he still is the pivot of that interest. The people wanted a fighter of exactly his proportions, style, power, and skill to lift boxing out of the rut. They wanted a man with a punch, the power to punish, the will to hurt in the ring. And Louis was that man.

In the midst of national depression, in the thick of problems of national and international import and vexation, boxing just *had* to bring out a man like Louis, or go into hibernation. Louis was produced, and today boxing interest is at a fever pitch, for even with war talk, America has gone sports daffy.

Joe Louis has done nothing that should stain his reputation in the pages of this magazine, or in the esteem of its editor. THE RING is duly and effectively thankful for the many benefices which Louis has bestowed on boxing merely by letting nature build him up and throw him into the arena.

There is in the giving of every outstanding figure in sport, be he white, black, red, or what have you, a tremendous influence for good. There are millions in this country—in any country with vast population—who are influenced by example, and the youth of America has been influenced by him.

The original 3A status of Louis, pictured in his Army uniform alongside his wife, made many observers curious. THE RING was partially responsible for bringing about Louis' switch to 1A status.

A number of Joe Louis' most ardent admirers have asked us "What have you against Joe Louis?"

Well we have just this big collection of evidence to prove that we have nothing against Joe Louis but the greatest admiration for him as a fighter and a public citizen:

1) THE RING has given to Joe Louis four belts not only as emblems of his championship, but as tokens of the respect in which THE RING and its editor and staff hold the champion of the world.

2) THE RING has presented to Joe Louis medals for being its Boxer of the Year. These annual awards of THE RING are made not alone for boxing skill. They involve public relations, influence of the American boy, benefices to American sport.

3) THE RING steadfastly has held up Joe Louis as a credit to boxing and to his race.

That is what THE RING "has against Joe Louis."

From bigots, from race-haters, from un-American Americans, have come, down the years, letters berating THE RING for its vehement admiration of Joe Louis. They have attacked the editor for standing by Joe through the years. To these THE RING has said, "You are on a par with the race-haters of Nazi Germany, and we want none of you. Buy some other magazine. We can get along without your kind."

That's what THE RING "has against Joe Louis."

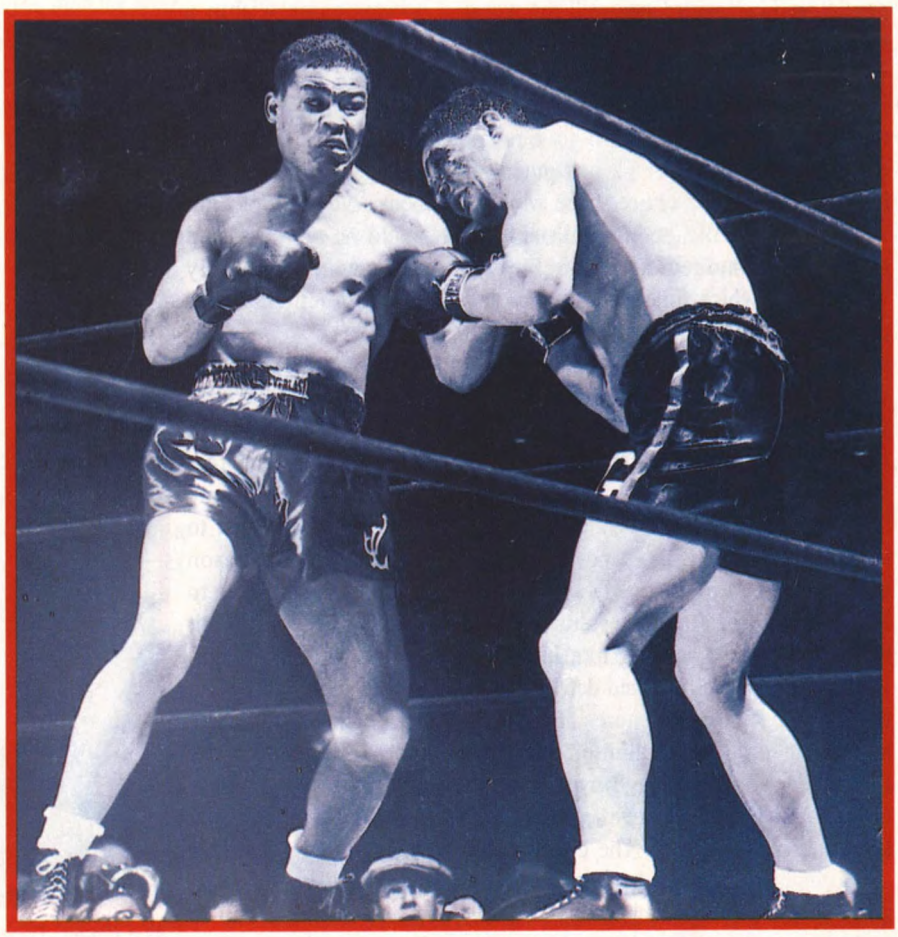
For upholding the right of a Negro to all the respect and admiration that must go to every well-behaved exemplar of a healthy sport, THE RING has been attacked by persons who cling to that shoddy, un-American principle of race inferiority and subjugation. It has told these people to take their custom elsewhere.

That's what THE RING "has against Joe Louis."

THE RING believes it has done more for boxing, more for the health and well-being of the sport, than any men, or group of men connected with the game in this country—champion or promoters.

The writer believes that Nathaniel S. Fleischer, with whom he has been associated for the last 36 years, has done more for boxing in this country than all the Rickards, Mike Jacobses, Boxing Commissions, NBAs, and whatever and whoever else you can muster. Through THE RING, Fleischer has done more to clean up, and keep clean, the stables of American boxing than any other man in the entire history of the game. That's saying a lot and covering a lot of ground.

But enough about that. What's going to



Louis destroys Arturo Godoy in a 1940 title defense. With a bout against top-rated Lou Nova on tap, many thought the champ would tear Nova up the same way he did Godoy.

After the Nova defense, former light heavyweight champ Billy Conn figured to be the leading contender for another shot at Louis. When the two, pictured here making an appearance at a football game, first fought, Conn was beating Louis until he got knocked out in the 13th round.

happen in the heavyweight division when Joe Louis goes into the Army?

The answer to that will be best found after his fight with Lou Nova, which we predict will end with Louis still the world champion by a knockout and the story of which will appear in the next issue.

If Lou beats Joe that night, then Joe will enter the Army unable to get a return engagement until after he has put in at least six months of service. If he wins, as we predict he will, then he will take the title with him into retirement for at least a year, during which time Mike Jacobs and the New York Commission will stage a heavyweight elimination tournament to decide who rates best among the heavyweights. Such a tournament will probably find Billy Conn back in the spotlight as the leader.

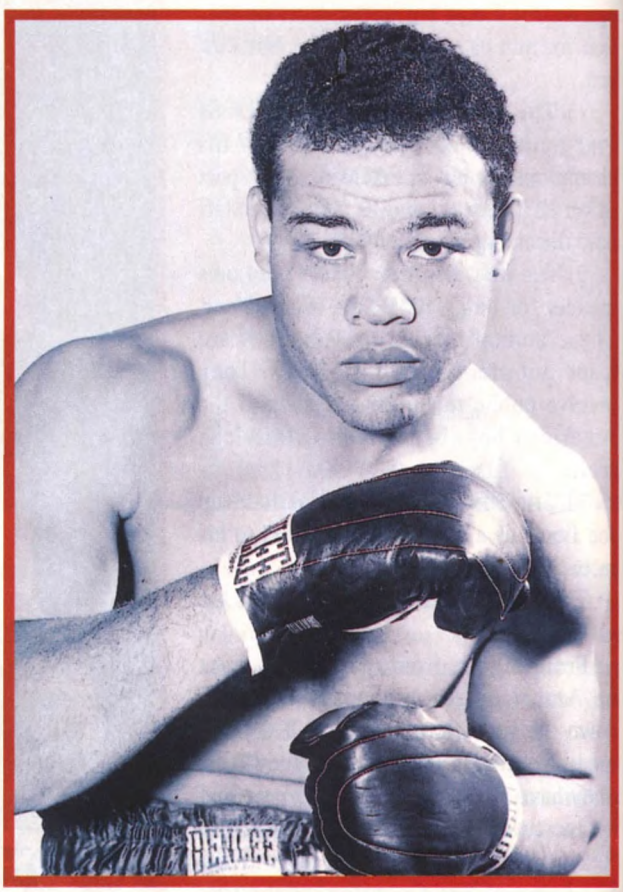
From the showing of all heavyweights against Joe Louis, Billy stands out as the ablest contender. But, Billy, like Joe Louis, is in the draft. He has drawn a low number and since sending him his questionnaire, in which he asked deferment on the ground of dependencies, Billy has married, thereby placing himself in a position similar to that of The Brown Bomber, except that Billy has not the funds that Louis has buried away. The chances are that because of Billy's late marriage, he will be deferred, in which case he should make a ton of money for himself by rating the outstanding contender for the title.

If Louis should score over Nova, the public undoubtedly will accept Billy Conn as the champ pro tem, because it will always remember that the Pittsburgh Adonis came within a punch or two of dethroning Louis at the Yankee Stadium. But if Nova should come through with a victory, then a Nova-Conn fight would be a natural and Louis would probably remain in retirement for good.

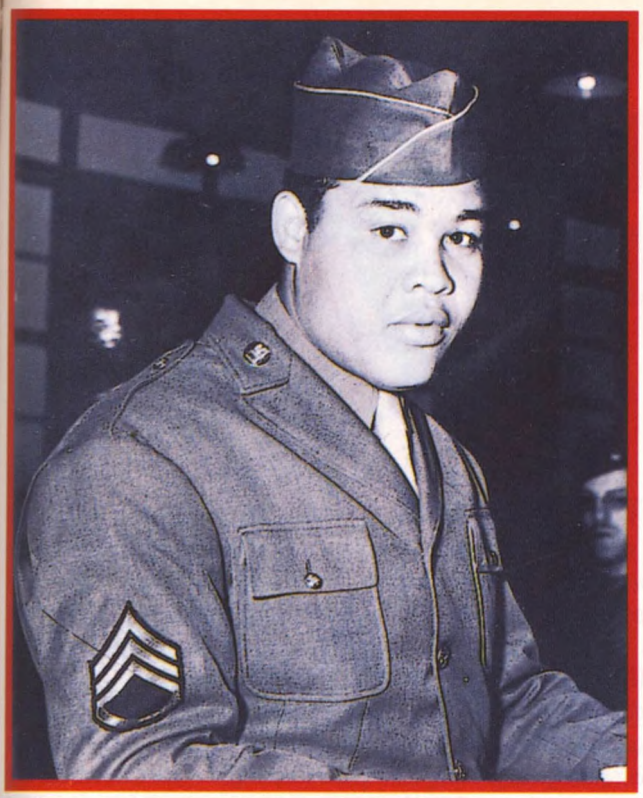
Those who have kept in touch with boxing through THE RING are well aware of the fact that for a long time Louis has been eager to retire. The only reason he has not done so to date was because he felt that he had an obligation to pay off for Julian Black, John Roxborough, and Mike Jacobs, the trio that steered him into fame and fortune. That this trio will suffer tremendously financially through Joe's call to the colors is obvious, and whether they can induce Louis to continue where he left off after he gets into the Army is a question.

Now, though Louis' boss will be Uncle Sam instead of Uncle Mike, and though for a time he will be paid only $21 per month as against the thousands he has collected for 30 minutes of fighting in the ring, we feel that Joe Louis welcomes the liberation from the bondage that has been his since he won the title from Jimmy Braddock. At least so he has told us, and we believe him. If he had had his own way, he would have enlisted in the Cavalry long before this, but in addition to his other dependents, he had to think of Roxborough, Black, and Jacobs, three others who are very much dependent on him.

Louis, as a fighter, is the idol of his race. He has been the savior of boxing. He has instilled an interest in the sport such as no one in the past history of the game, other than John L. Sullivan and Jack Dempsey, has aroused. Whether he retires after he joins the Army or comes back into the sport, he will always remain in the eyes of the fistic world as one of the great-



As a fighter, Louis had been long supported by THE RING. Editor Nat Fleischer and his staff first recognized Louis as a future sensation when he was just a couple of fights into his pro career.



Louis joined the Army after instilling into boxing interest that the sport hadn't seen since former champs John L. Sullivan and Jack Dempsey wore gloves. Whether Louis retired or not after returning from the Army, he would have been viewed as one of the greatest champions of all-time.

est champions of all-time—the man who defended his title against all comers more often than did any other champion in the history of the heavyweight division.

What have we against Joe Louis? Absolutely nothing. We respect him as a champion of champions and we know that when he gets into the fighting forces of Uncle Sam, he will make as great a record for himself as he has in the roped square. THE RING, when its articles on Louis and the draft were published, did not care a hoot whether Joe Louis was in 3A, 1A, or 10Z. If the draft board thought he was entitled to 3A, that was that. Apparently, however, the Chicago draft board realized its error after attention was called to it by THE RING.

But THE RING had a somewhat selfish interest in this. It is for boxing, and it wanted to see the leaders of boxing, Louis, Conn, and others who are well off financially, come to the fore in a national movement that is tremendously more vital in even its most infinitesimal details than all boxing itself.

THE RING was ashamed to find the heavyweight champion of the world apparently shadowed by a dependency claim while so many big things are in progress for national defense and less financially fortunate youths were taken away from their little earnings to serve their country.

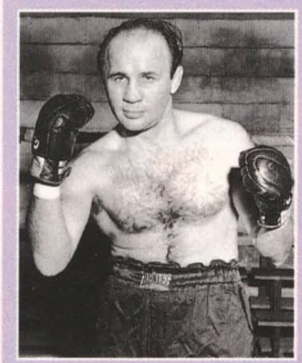
The appearance of Joe Louis in the uniform of Uncle Sam will be of great benefit to Army morale, especially among his own people. While it is true that the United States Treasury has benefited considerably from the huge taxes that have been paid into its coffers through the fights Louis has waged in the ring, Uncle Sam needs far more than these fights out of Louis, and he will now get it. ■

THE RING, November 1941

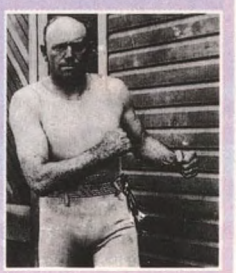
The Cover: Heavyweight contender Melio Bettina graced the cover of THE RING during a tense time in United States history, with the country on the verge of war. Bettina, of Beacon, New York, was ranked seventh among heavyweight contenders at the time.

Chalking One Up For Chalky: It took 13 years for Chalky Wright to finally climb to the top of the boxing world, winning the featherweight crown with a rousing 11th-round knockout of Joey Archibald at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. Before Wright's ascension, boxing experts already called him "The Uncrowned Champion."

King Cochrane: Freddie "Red" Cochrane was the surprise of 1941, winning the welterweight title. Cochrane had shown flashes of brilliance through parts of his career, but had lacked consistency until winning a 15-round decision over Fritzie Zivic (pictured) for the welterweight crown on July 29, 1941.



Slugging vs. Skill: The middleweight ranks were filled with both sluggers and clever tacticians in the early-1940s. THE RING looked at a few of these fighters with contrasting styles, in particular the matchup between Billy Soose and Georgie Abrams (pictured), who proved slugging can be fun when he whipped Soose three times.



Coiffure Confusion: Many boxers like to look good in the ring, but throughout history, long hair caused problems, often hindering a fighter's sight. Three-division former champion Bob Fitzsimmons, it was pointed out, never had that problem.

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

I'm 33 years old and have been watching boxing since I was knee high. I grew up in an era when boxing was still accessible via network TV. This, unfortunately, is no longer the case. Network television has abandoned boxing, and as a result, the sport is losing a whole generation of fans. Through the 1970s and '80s, quality fights were on free TV every weekend, fights like Barry McGuigan-Eusebio Pedroza, Vinny Pazienza-Greg Haugen, Bobby Chacon-Cornelius Boza-Edwards, and many other great fights too numerous to mention.

Today, people have to pay ridiculous fees to watch pay-per-view fights like the ones that I saw for free as a kid. Hats off to ESPN2 for the great job they do with *Friday Night Fights*, but that's still a cable network. So before boxing's greed kills the sport, promoters and television executives need to find a solution and bring boxing back to its roots—network TV.

ROBERT STOCKER
Virginia Beach, VA

GIVE CHRIS CREDIT

Congratulations to Chris Byrd on his win over David Tua. Now maybe he will get some of the recognition he deserves. I'm tired of people like HBO's Larry Merchant putting Byrd down by saying he's boring to watch. Nobody is expecting Marco Antonio Barrera to beat Oscar De La Hoya, because of the difference in size. Nonetheless, Byrd gives away 20-25 pounds almost every time he fights. He should not be expected to knock out his opponents. Byrd can, however, outbox them much the same way Pernell Whitaker did, which, to me, is plenty exciting in itself.

DONALD HAUGERUD
Montevideo, MN

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Chris Byrd pops David Tua in the head en route to a unanimous 12-round decision. Reader Donald Haugerud hopes that the light-hitting but slick-boxing Byrd will finally receive the recognition he deserves following the victory that earned him the number-one IBF ranking.

VIVA MEXICO!

When Marco Antonio Barrera upset Naseem Hamed, it again took a Mexican boxer to the forefront of the sport. There have been many great Mexican and Mexican/American boxers in the past. Below is a list of my 12 personal favorites: 1) Ruben Olivares; 2) Mando Ramos; 3) Vicente Saldivar; 4) Pipino Cuevas; 5) Chucho Castillo; 6) Bobby Chacon; 7) Salvador Sanchez; 8) Lupe Pintor; 9) Miguel Canto; 10) Rafael Herrera; 11) Carlos Palomino; 12) Manuel Ramos.

The happy-looking duo of Bobby Chacon and Ruben Olivares clown around during the buildup to their 1973 fight, which Olivares won via ninth-round TKO. Both fighters are among reader Jim Amato's all-time favorite fighters of Mexican heritage.

Honorable mention: Danny Lopez, Ernie Lopez, Daniel Zaragoza.

My least favorites among the great boxers of Mexican heritage are Julio Cesar Chavez, Carlos Zarate, and Oscar De La Hoya—all outstanding boxers, but also first-class crybabies.

JIM AMATO
Ashland, OH

MAD AT MAX

Friday Night Fights' Max Kellerman is a boxing historian, and a very good one. Period! He is not an analyst. He is not able to break down a fight, because he misses nuances and subtleties. Even so, he's treated with deference that is not earned or deserved. Max's immaturity was never more evident than when he recently got giddy about Hasim Rahman talking some "serious smack." Rudeness apparently is an aphrodisiac to Max. Not long ago in an interview, Max indicated that he would like to be an actor someday. Perhaps, in the meantime, he could start by acting like a serious sports commentator.

RON TINNELL
Carlsbad, CA

DREAM ON

The year 2002 is shaping up to be a great one for boxing. Here are some of the dream fights I'd love to see in the coming months:

•Mike Tyson-David Tua (battle of the fireplugs)

•Lance Whitaker-Wladimir Klitschko (battle of "super" heavyweights)

•Andrew Lewis-Vernon Forrest (the winner to fight Shane Mosley)

•Kostya Tszyu-Randall Bailey (slugfest)

•Jose Luis Castillo-Acelino Freitas (another war)

•Erik Morales-Paulie Ayala (I want to see one of these guys on the wrong end of a bad decision for a change)

JOHN C. LASLOW
Orlando, FL

TEA AND SYMPATHY

Although I totally agree with most observers that Lennox Lewis' demise was aided by complacency and arrogance, the unabashed joy with which his dethronement has been greeted by some American writers makes me sick to the stomach. Reading Johnnie Whitehead's biased summary ("Rocking The World: What Rahman's Victory Means To Boxing") in the August 2001 issue of THE RING absolutely infuriated me.

When Whitehead wrote: "Having a personable American ruling boxing's glamour division is probably better for business than having a tea-sipping Brit on the throne," he not only perpetuated a ridiculous stereotype, but he seems to assume that sipping tea and being personable are mutually exclusive practices. Lewis is an extremely personable man. Whitehead even tries the oldest trick in the book when faced with a winner he doesn't like: Completely disparage his opponents. Well, Mr. Whitehead, if Lewis was so bad, how come it took the good ol' U.S. of A. the last seven years to find somebody to beat him? No wonder he got bored.

IAN McNEILLY
Grand Cayman, BWI ■

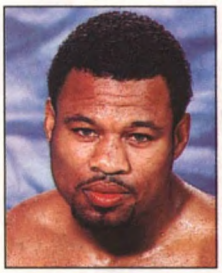
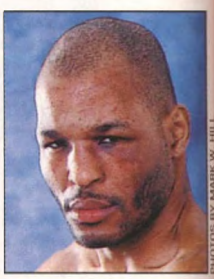
PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Hasim Rahman, Don King, and Lennox Lewis hype the rematch. Although reader Ian McNeilly feels "complacency and arrogance" helped lead to Lewis' downfall, he is distressed with THE RING's coverage of the Englishman's defeat at the hands of "The Rock."

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

WILL "X" MARK THE SPOT FOR MOSLEY?

PHOTOS BY MARK W. HILL

Are Mosley and Hopkins on a collision course?

Sometimes a fighter's body dictates that he move up in weight. Sometimes, it's his wallet telling him to get bigger.

Sugar Shane Mosley moved up from lightweight to welterweight in 1999 because he was killing himself to make 135 pounds. Now, after only two years as a 147-pounder, the WBC champ is making the leap up to 154. But it's not because he can't make welter anymore. It's because since his career-defining win over **Oscar De La Hoya** in June '00, he hasn't been able to find a big fight with a premium payday attached to it, and when IBF champ **Vernon Forrest** continued to price himself out of a January '02 unification bout, Mosley finally got fed up. In January 2002, if all goes according to plan, Sugar Shane will fight highly skilled **Winky Wright** for the IBF junior middleweight crown, and after that, paydays approaching the eight-figure range will become a possibility.

Perhaps the most intriguing of those is a bout with undisputed middleweight champ **Bernard Hopkins**, who may come down to 155 pounds to meet Mosley. Hopkins' adviser, **Lou DiBella**, said shortly after Hopkins' awesome thrashing of **Felix Trinidad** that he thought Mosley was the most logical superfight for "The Executioner." One man who has a vested interest in the situation, **Norman Horton**—the publicist for both fighters—has a different take.

"I really think that fight is a little premature," Horton said. "Bernard has been a natural middleweight for almost 10 years, and Shane has yet to have one fight at 154. I really don't think Bernard is on Shane's radar screen or Shane is on Bernard's radar screen, at least not in the year 2002. Shane has a number of possible good fights at 154—Oscar, **Fernando Vargas**, or maybe Trinidad, if he comes back down to 154."

The common perception, however, is that De La Hoya, Mosley's first choice, wants no part of a rematch with the only man ever to decisively defeat him. But Horton remains optimistic.

"It has to happen," Horton said. "It's a fight everyone wants to see again. When you think about it, you had two fighters from Los Angeles, participating in the first fight ever at the Staples Center, and one lost the fight. I don't think Oscar wants to leave boxing with that on his record."

But many think the most logical fight for "The Golden Boy" is a grudge match with Vargas, or perhaps even a rematch with Trinidad, against whom De La Hoya should have a better chance of avenging his other loss. That could leave Mosley and Hopkins—who also wants Oscar—out in the cold. And that should suit boxing fans just fine. What could be better than the top two pound-for-pound fighters in the world proving conclusively who deserves that title? For Horton, just about anything.

"I have two shining lights, and honestly, I don't want to see my two shining lights meet each other. But I don't think anybody cares what I think," Horton said with a laugh. "I know that business is business."

It's when what's good for business and what's good for pleasure intersect that the sport of boxing really thrives. If fights with the likes of De La Hoya, Vargas, and Trinidad fall through for both guys, Hopkins-Mosley becomes the obvious option. And as for the opinion that Hopkins is simply too big for the current king of welterweights, remember that 50 years ago, another Sugar, **Ray Robinson**, moved up from 147 and bumped off an all-time great middleweight champion in **Jake LaMotta**. If Mosley really is as great as Robinson, this could be his chance to prove it.

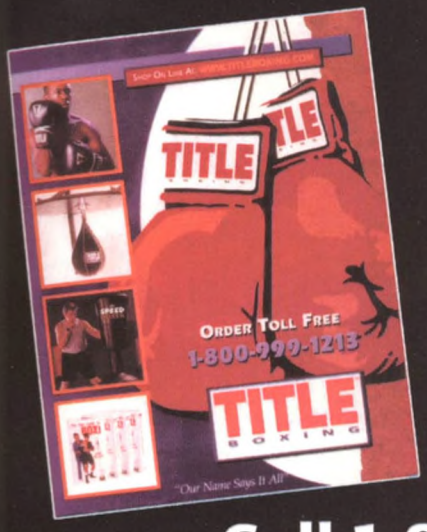
LISTEN UP

The latest date being discussed for the **Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales** rematch is March 2, 2002, with the MGM Grand in Las Vegas hosting ... Another repeatedly delayed major fight, **Joel Casamayor** vs. **Acelino Freitas**, is now on for January 12 on Showtime. The co-feature is a solid matchup between featherweight contenders **Augie Sanchez** and **Robbie Peden** ... HBO presents two outstanding rematches on February 9. The main event is **Paulie Ayala-Bones Adams** II, and the chief support is **Rafael Marquez-Mark Johnson** II. ■

PHOTO BY PAT GIBB

Adams: Gets second chance vs. Ayala

NO POLITICS. JUST BOXING.



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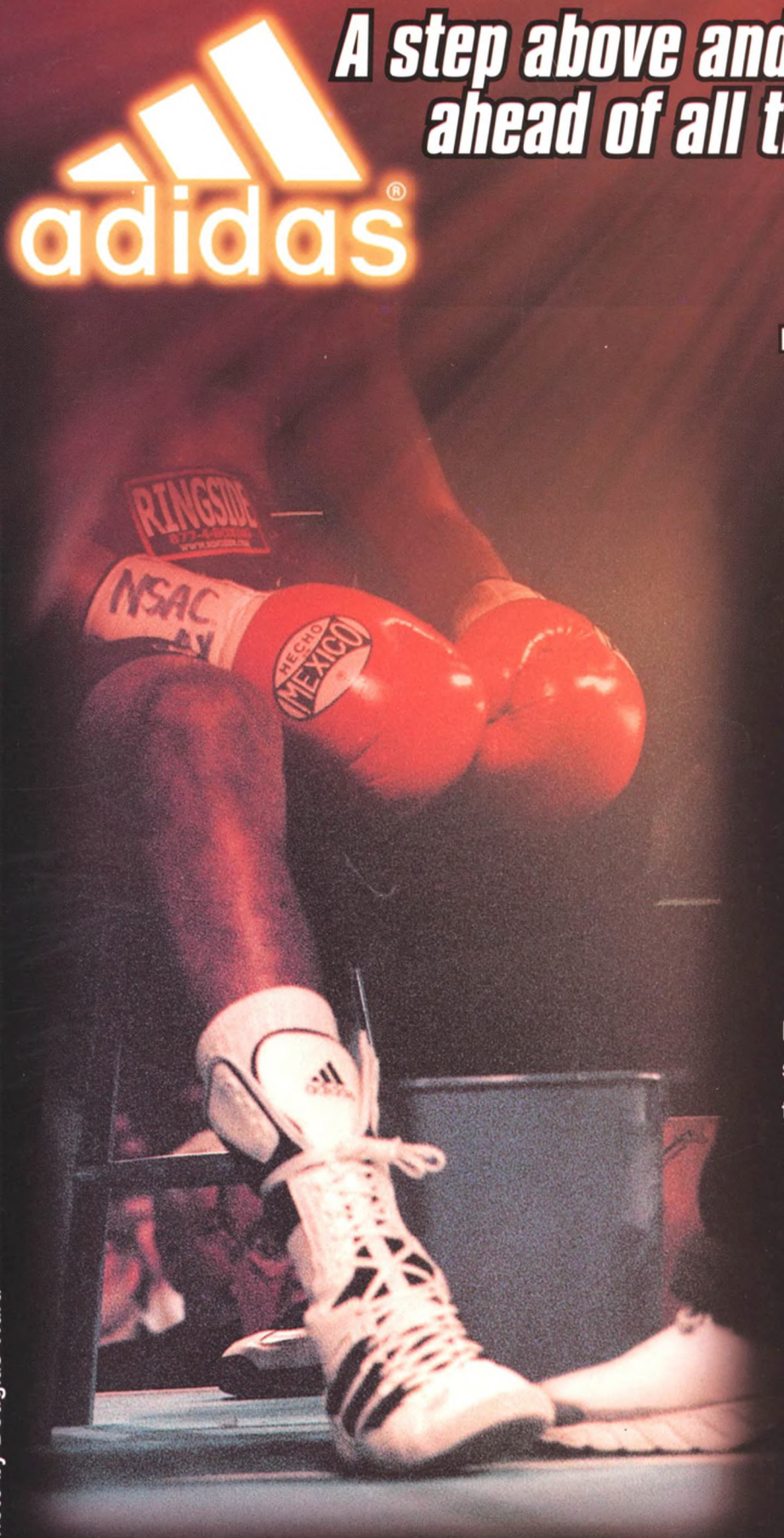

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